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Hindi Film Stars And Politics

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This Man Would Lose An Election In Bombay

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Exclusive Opinion Poll

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Traditionally Fashionable-

Khatau
VOILES

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Vol. XXIII No.3 June 1983
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ON THE MARQUEE

IT IS NOT unlikely that the Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, will call a poll earlier than one is next due. Mrs Gandhi is now less able to shape events to build into opportunities for her. The timing of the next general election will be determined, if we stay on the democratic course, by political developments over which she has no decisive control.

Whenever the elections are held, there will be more parties and more independents in the fray, this time round, than ever before. And the outcome will almost certainly be a hung Parliament. Consider the scenario: the Telugu Desam will put up its own candidates for Parliament from Andhra Pradesh. The DMK will contest from Tamil Nadu. The Lok Dal will field candidates from Haryana and from many districts of Uttar Pradesh and from some districts of Bihar and Orissa. The Marxists will nominate activists in West Bengal. There will be Assamese candidates either put by the AASU or supported by it if the students choose to get involved in the general election. Communists will fight for seats from Kerala. The Akalis would want their Sikhs to represent them in New Delhi. The Congress (S) will contest a number of seats from Maharashtra and Kerala. And, on the basis of earned merit in Karnataka and memories of 1977, the Janata Party will undoubtedly field candidates from all constituencies in Karnataka and from at least 150 other constituencies in the country. In the light of the recent political history of India, little arithmetic is required to calculate approximately how many seats the above combatants will leave to Congress (I) and to the BJP to win.

Neither the Congress (I) nor the BJP, no matter Mrs Gandhi's resources, no matter Mr Vajpayee's increasingly popular projection as the future Prime Minister of India, is likely to emerge a clear winner in the next general election.

In the event, a coalition will have to be formed to govern the country. A workable and a desirable coalition in the circumstances, could be between the Congress (I) and the BJP. Mrs Gandhi and the leadership of the BJP share an emotional view about the integrity of India and the role of the Centre. But it is too early for this probable eventuality to be realised in the mid '80s. A coalition of Southern parties and the Congress (I), is only a remote possibility; so is a coalition of Southern parties and the BJP.

In the scenario I am painting, only a very patchy coalition of incompatible parties is likely to be sewn together and it will be called upon by the President to form the next Government of India.

Coalitions, howsoever patchy and diverse as they inherently are, are not necessarily catastrophic. They do present constitutional problems; there is always a likelihood that one or the other partner will pull out and pull down the coalition. There is always a possibility that we will have a general election to follow a general election—an expensive exercise for India.

In India, largely as a response to Jawaharlal Nehru's partisan demands on behalf of his Congress Party and later through his daughter's clever manipulations on an already tamed and believing people, we attach far too much importance to the stability of numbers and to stability by conformity. When a government that is stable by numbers and stable by political party conformity is installed, we almost automatically assume that such a Government is functioning and has performed!

We have come a long way, travelling always on the democratic road, except for the brief 1975 aberration. We survived the first State Communist Government in Kerala in the late '50s. We have survived a Marxist government in West Bengal. We survived the dislodging of the Congress monolith in 1977. And we survived the premature collapse of the first non-Congress government at the Centre. We do not seem to be unhappy with what has happened in Andhra and in Karnataka and we are, I think, now mature enough to live with a government by coalition at the Centre, since coalitions too are sometimes the end result of the democratic process.

R. V. Pandit

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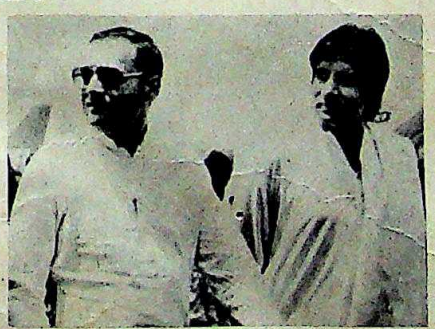

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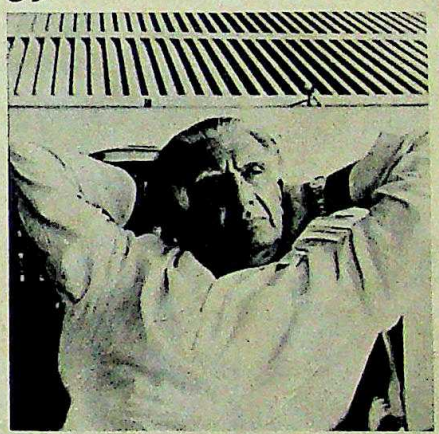

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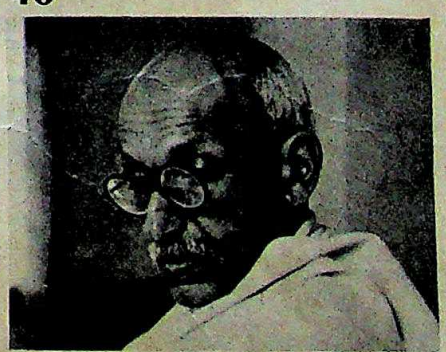

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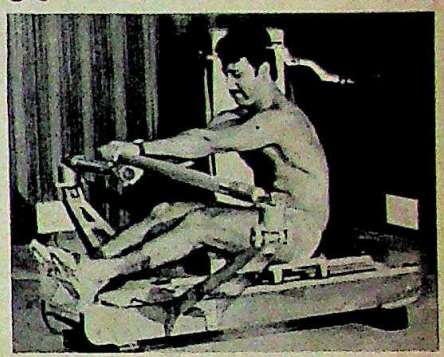

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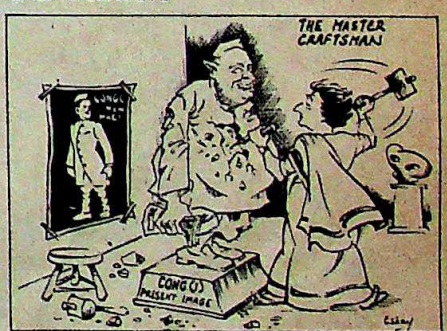

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Justice JC Shah
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The Justice at home, six years after the Commission that bore his name.

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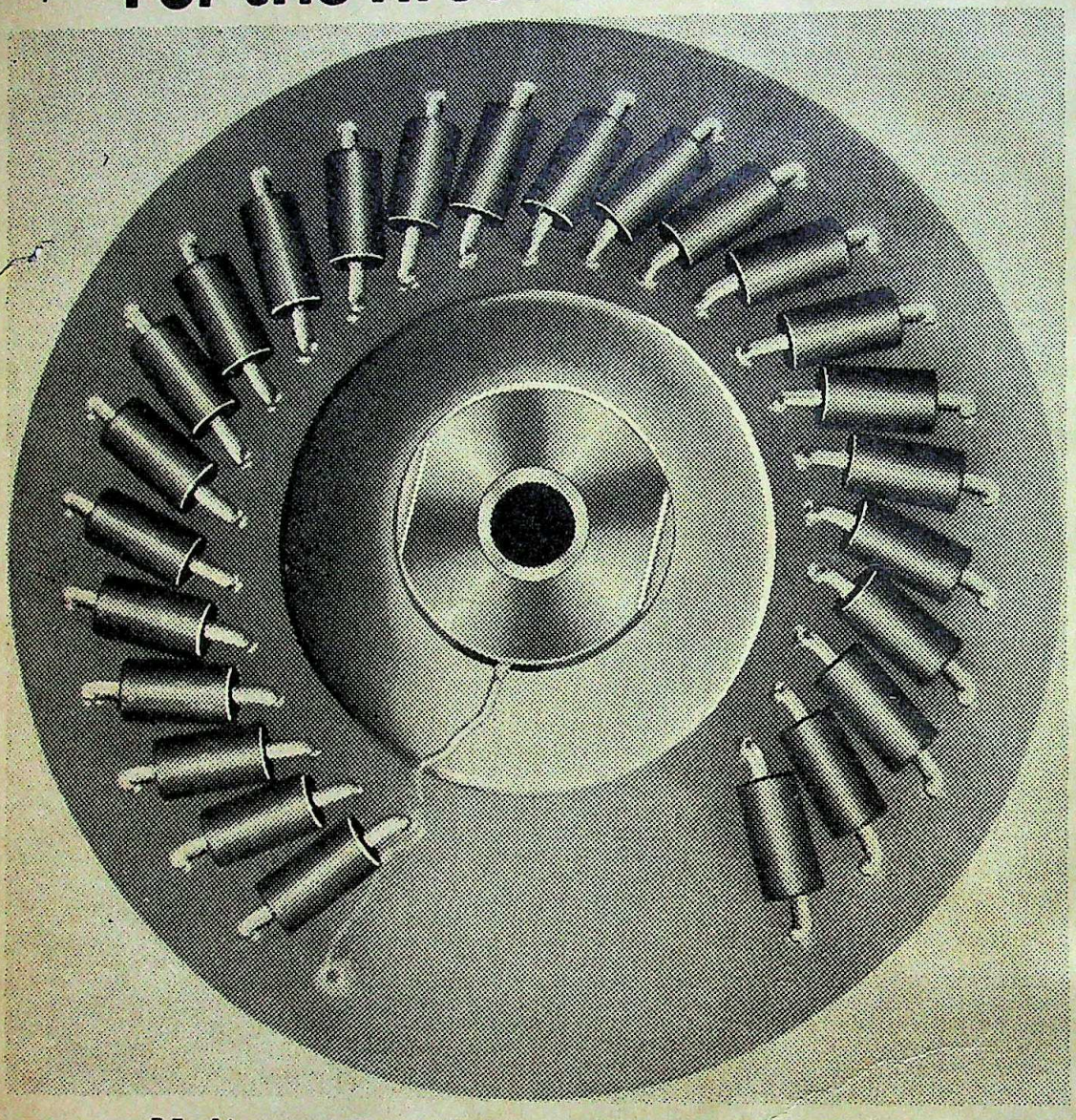

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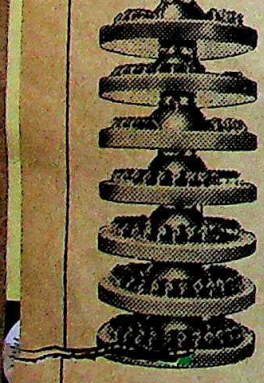

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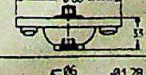
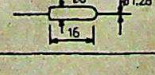
MRE 19	25 KV Breakdown Voltage 650 Milli-Amps.	MRE  mm
MDHR 21	10 KV Breakdown Voltage 250 Milli-Amps.	DHR  mm

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BY PC SORCAR, JR

GODMEN OR FRAUDMEN?

Sathya Sai Baba is no better than a second-rate conjurer

HUMAN NATURE IS a strange thing. Each night, hundreds of people come to my shows and see me chop a woman in half, make elephants vanish into thin air, and materialize objects out of nothing. Yet, nobody feels that I have any supernatural powers. But the same people, when confronted by a godman who performs a few simple conjuring tricks, are fooled by his pious protestations.

Take for instance, Sathya Sai Baba. Most magicians have no difficulty in reproducing his 'miracles' and the baba is therefore, unwilling to perform them in our presence. When I tried to visit his ashram, I was refused admission on several occasions. Finally, I had to disguise myself and pretend to be a wealthy Assamese businessman who wanted Sai Baba to cure his asthma, before I was allowed in.

It took me just five minutes to realize that something fishy was going on. For a start, devotees like myself were only allowed in to the sacred presence one at a time. All around the baba sat several 'followers' who were clearly regulars, or rather, members of his troupe. This is a common magician's ploy. Sometimes, when we call a member of the audience to the stage, we also arrange for four or five of our assistants to masquerade as other 'volunteers' from the crowd. Surrounded by people who are in on the trick, the genuine volunteer is easily intimidated and begins to suspend his scepticism.

This is Sai Baba's technique as well. It did not take me long to realize that all around me were his henchmen and this made me instantly suspicious. The baba gestured for me to speak. "I speak nothing except my own language," I said in a mixture of Assamese and broken Hindi. Baba's head furrowed in a frown.

At once, a 'devotee' scampered off to find an interpreter. I thought it strange that God should have language problems but kept my peace.

When the interpreter turned up, our conversation began in earnest. "What is your problem," asked Sai Baba. I told him that I was looking for a cure for asthma. "You have come to see me," he intoned piously. "Now, you will be better." And that it seemed, was that.

"Could I get some magic medicine," I asked.

"No need," said Sai Baba. How about some sacred ash—the *vibhuti* that he materialized out of thin air, I persisted. The baba began to look uncomfortable and I realized what had happened.

Materializing ash is the oldest trick in the book. The ash is contained in a bag in the arm-pit. A thin elastic strip connects this bag to the conjurer's hand. All he has to do is to tug at the strip for the sacred substance to tumble forth. (It is interesting that Sai Baba never materializes *vibhuti* when he is wearing a half-sleeved shirt.)

That day, I was among the last visitors and the bag of ash was probably empty. There was no way that baba was going to be able to produce *vibhuti*. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw one of his planted 'devotees' shift a plate of *mithai* near him and guessed that he would try and palm something off the plate and then pretend to materialize it to make up for the non-appearance of the ash. Next to me was another plate of *mithai*, so I quickly palmed a dry *rosogolla* off it.

I had guessed right. When I asked again if baba could bless me with some ash, he contorted his hand in the *choo-mantar* gesture used by all magicians and then produced a *sandesh*. "Take this instead," he said proudly, while his henchmen oohed and aahed.

"Thank you," I said and made an abracadabra gesture of my own before materializing the *rosogolla*. "You can have this," I told him. Predictably, all hell broke loose. The baba began shouting things in a South Indian language while the other 'devotees' attempted to grab me. It was time to come clean. "I am PC Sorcar", I told him, "and I have now realized that you are just a magician." Sai Baba looked nonplussed and was led away by his sidekicks, while others hustled me out of the ashram premises and warned me never to return.

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Nearly all cases of seemingly paranormal behaviour have distinctly normal origins.

This incident was widely reported in the press and I gave several interviews explaining how most miracles were no more than palming The principle of producing an Omega watch from thin air is no different from the principle of producing a rabbit from a felt hat. All of Sai Baba's stunts can be performed by any moderately skilled magician.

But such is human nature that I doubt if my expose made any difference to Sai Baba's following. People want to be gulled. They want to believe in magic. They need people to tell them that God is on their side. And for proof, they will accept any second-rate conjuring trick.

It is no different in the West. Except there, godmen are not in fashion. Instead, the more sophisticated extra-sensory perception (ESP) swindle is in vogue. Magicians pretend that they have telepathic skills or can bend matter with the power of their minds and people are readily fooled.

Most of us stage magicians perform a mind-reading trick during which we are blindfolded and 'read' numbers off a blackboard or we guess what is written on a slip of paper that is concealed from us. The techniques vary (trick blindfolds or assistants who communicate the secret to us in code) but believe me, they have nothing to do with ESP. But the same trick, performed for an audience of scientists, is suddenly elevated to the level of a scientific breakthrough.

A leading conman in the field was a young Israeli magician called Uri Geller who claimed to have a mind that could triumph over matter. Geller's most famous effect was his apparent ability to bend a spoon simply by staring at it. I was invited to a TV programme in Madrid where Geller performed his spoon-bending act. I thought it odd that he should have brought along his own spoon and asked if I could examine it. While it appeared to be perfectly normal to the untrained eye, I soon worked out the technique. And then, in front of a distinctly shifty Geller, I straightened out the spoon with a similar powerful stare and returned it to him.

Now of course, most magicians have cottoned on to the trick and the 'Geller spoon' is sold at all magic shops.

In my experience, nearly all cases of seemingly paranormal behaviour have distinctly normal origins. I am a very religious person and have always looked for genuine godmen or for evidence that miracles do happen. Sadly, I have always been disappointed.

The only exceptions are the yogis of India who have trained their bodies to levels where the laws of medicine no longer apply. My father, the late PC Sorcar, Senior, had an assistant with yogic training on whom he would perform his tongue-cutting illusion. It was a remarkably effective trick in the course of which he would seemingly cut off half of the man's tongue and show it to any doctor who happened to be in the audience. After the doctor was satisfied that the tongue had been severed and had examined the assistant, my father would appear to stick the severed bit back on again.

One evening, the trick was going as planned when the doctor noticed that the assistant had stopped breathing. He also had no heartbeat. This was more than my father had planned on and he hastily 'stuck' the severed tongue back. At this, the assistant suddenly came back to life and went on as though nothing had happened.

After the show, my father collared the assistant and asked him what he'd done. "Oh, that," said the man. "That's a little yogic technique I know. I thought it might add something to the trick."

So, yoga remains beyond the purview of science. But Sai Baba, Uri Geller and the rest of their ilk are no more than second-rate conjurers and conmen.

♦

PC Sorcar Jr is India's leading stage magician.

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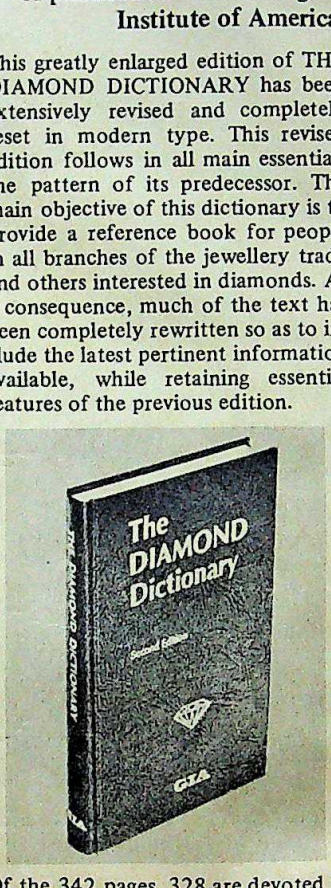

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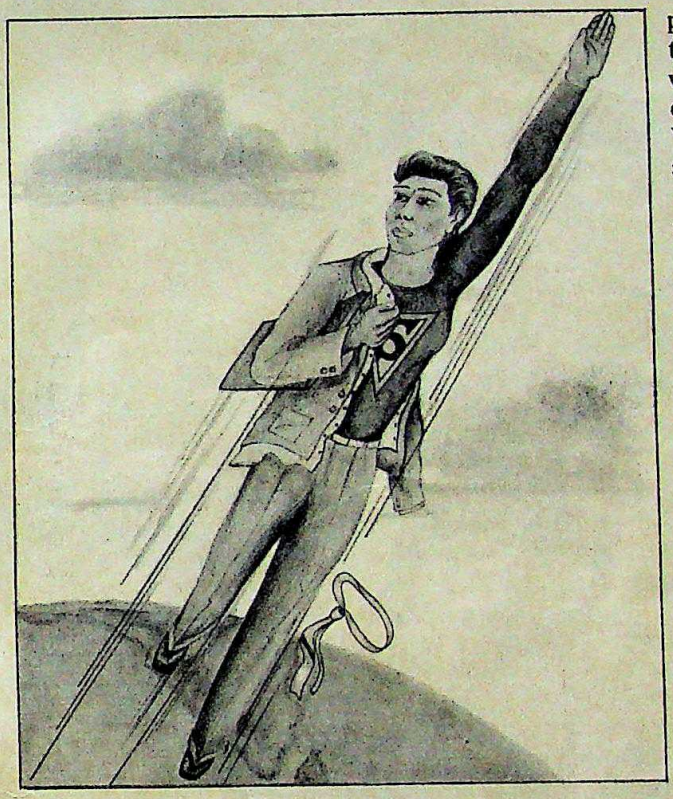
BY RICHARD LAMBERT

PURSUING EXCELLENCE

A new American bestseller rewrites management theory



IT IS TIME to scrap that ill-conceived matrix chart, forget that misshapen learning curve. The good news from America is that the corporate planners who made the lives of line managers such hell during the '70s are now on the retreat.

It may have something to do with the recession. It probably also owes something to the fact that so many companies have been through the strategists' mill—and still not found the promised land. Whatever the explanation, there appears to be a refreshing change of mood among US consultancy firms.

No one would ever accuse an employee of the Boston Consulting Group or McKinsey of humility. But there does seem to be a growing recognition that success in business may depend on more than just a proper understanding of a handful of rather simple rules.

A sign of the times is the success of a recently-published book by two men with a McKinsey background, Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman. They had the good idea of identifying a little over 40 really successful US businesses, and then trying to discover what makes them tick. The result makes exciting reading.

Although written in the style that might be expected of two Stanford Masters of Business Administration (MBAs) there is no disguising the message: successful companies treat their employees well, and have an almost irrational dedication to serving their customers.

The central theme is that winning businesses are not motivated simply by financial goals, or by an exclusively analytical approach to their markets. It's not that they don't make plans, or do all the market research they can. But they refuse to let planning become an end in itself, and are willing to encourage practices which would simply not bear analysis in the ivory towers.

Frito-lay, for instance, is prepared to spend several hundred dollars sending a truck to restock a store with a couple of cartons of potato chips. That, you would think, is the road to ruin in a competitive commodity business. Yet through its dedication to the sales force and its '99.5 per cent service level', the company built a market share and a profit margin that was the envy of the food industry.

Peters and Waterman say that eight attributes generally characterised the excellent companies which they studied. The best bits of the book are the anecdotes which accompany these golden rules.

- A bias for action. In the great companies, you may well see a swarm of small task forces, each with a life of perhaps five days and aiming to come up with an idea that will result in line operators doing something different. You will not find a 35-person working party spending 18 months on a 500-page report.

You will find an intense but informal system of internal communications—what Hewlett-Packard calls, 'management by walking about'—and a willingness to break down the organisation to a size where people can get to grips with its problems. There will be an emphasis on experiment—what Fluor describes as, 'taking an idea and making metal out of it', and a determination to keep things simple. At Procter and Gamble, the language of action is the famous one page memorandum. At Texas Instruments, there is an emphasis on the doable: each manager is set one milestone per quarter. "More than two objectives is no objective," is one of TI's watchwords.

- Close to the customer. The authors say that in observing the excellent companies, and especially the way they interact with customers, "What we found most striking was the consistent presence of obsession. This characteristically occurred as a seemingly unjustifiable overcommitment to some form of quality, reliability or service."

McDonald's is fanatical about its slogan of "quality, service, cleanliness and value." Boeing is absurdly concerned about its after-sales service. International Business Machines (IBM) wants its salesmen to 'act as if they were on the customer's payroll.' Somehow, all this pays off at the bottom line.

Of course, it is possible to overdo the overkill. The safeguard is to listen to what the customers say, and to find

In Search Of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best Run Companies. By Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman.

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Good companies encourage their managers to think of themselves as champions.

a particular niche in the market where you can be better at doing the job than anyone else. "Braniff thought that quality meant Alexander Calder paint jobs and comely stewardesses. Delta knows it means planes that arrive on time."

• Autonomy and Entrepreneurship. Good companies encourage their managers to think of themselves as champions, and are prepared to sacrifice a neat organisation chart to keep people on their toes. Small independent new venture teams are squirrelling away the whole time at 3M; brands compete against each other within Procter and Gamble; IBM has its famous 'performance shoot-outs'. Johnson and Johnson believes that "You've got to be willing to fail," while Hewlett-Packard says, "We're not really sure exactly how the innovative process works. But there's one thing we do know: the easy communications, the absence of barriers to talking to one another are essential."

• Productivity through people. "IBM's philosophy," says Thomas J Watson Jr, "is largely contained in three beliefs. I want to begin with what I think is the most important: our respect for the individual." When Rene MacPherson took over at Dana Corporation ten years ago, his first act was to destroy 22½ inches of policy manual and replace them with a one page statement of his belief in management's obligation to communicate with Dana people, and to provide them with proper training, incentives, and security.

The authors warn about what they call the 'gimmicks trap'. Quality circles, they say, are only the latest in a long line of tools that can either be very helpful, or can simply serve as a smokescreen while management continues to get away with not doing its real job of managing people.

• Hands on, value driven. The successful companies are unashamed collectors of tales and legends in support of their basic beliefs. Frito-lay tells service stories; J and J tells quality stories; 3M tells innovation stories. Their values are usually expressed in qualitative rather than quantitative terms, and flow right through the organisation. Delta people really do believe that they work for a better airline.

Another striking feature of the winners is that they are nearly all marked by the personality of individual leaders who created and defined their values. Disney, Watson, Hewlett-Packard—the list is almost as long as that of the companies themselves. Successful leaders can both inspire the troops with lofty visions and keep them up to the mark through their daily attention to detail.

• Stick to the knitting. It's no surprise to learn that the excellent companies seldom make major acquisitions. The typical diversification move dilutes the guiding qualitative theme: management loses its 'feel' if it jumps into new activities.

Companies like 3M are constantly making acquisitions—but they tend to be small, and related to its existing business disciplines. The good companies like to expand their field of operations in manageable steps—and are prepared to abandon a move quickly if it does not work out.

• Simple form, lean staff. Few of the excellent companies have formal matrix structures. Johnson and Johnson, for one, goes to extreme lengths to keep its organisation simple, divisionalised, and autonomous. And it seems that however big the company, there is seldom need for more than about 100 people in the corporate headquarters.

• Simultaneous loose-tight properties. This is a nasty piece of jargon which means the co-existence of firm central direction and maximum individual autonomy, and is really a summary of the other seven points.

Some of these ideas sound trite. Yet it is remarkably difficult to think of any outstanding business anywhere that does not share a majority of these characteristics. ♦

imprint
THE KIND OF MAGAZINE THAT HAS TO BE READ, THOUGHT ABOUT... AND NOT JUST SKIMMED THROUGH.

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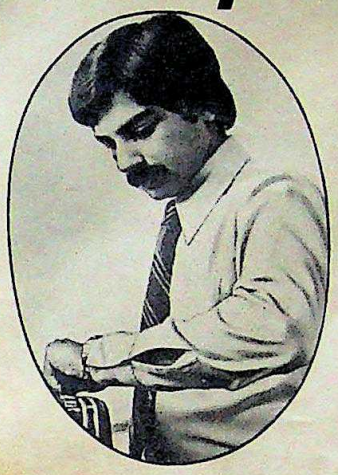

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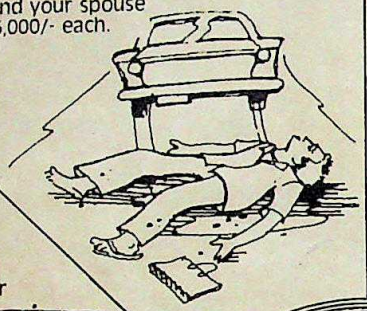

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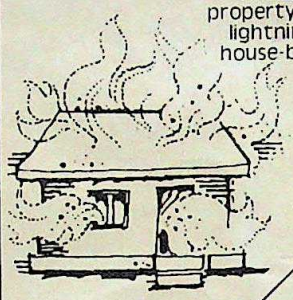

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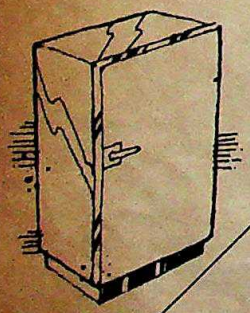

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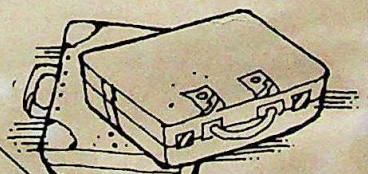

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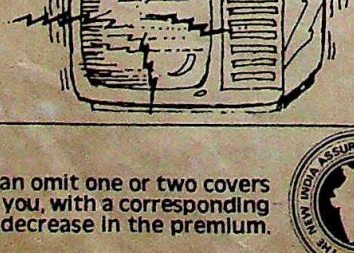

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BY ASHOK GOPAL

THE ROCK INVASION

Why foreign bands are stopping off here

WHEN STEWART COPELAND, Andy Summers and Sting landed in Bombay in March 1980, probably only a handful of people knew that they belonged to a British new wave band called the Police. Even the record companies hadn't heard of them though they were on top of the British pop charts. But when news of the group's concert in Bombay spread, hundreds of rock fans in the city grabbed on to the opportunity of seeing them for the first time. They were ready to pay upto Rs 100 just to see a rock concert by an international group–*any* international group it seemed, would do. The concert drew more than 3,000 people and ended with some thrilled fans chanting, "We want the *havaldars*." Subsequently, HMV released four albums. All sold well, and two were runaway hits.

Then came Kraftwerk, the West German electronic music stars. They had only one concert in Bombay, (September 1981), while on a stopover. A month later Campa Cola 'unleashed' Osibisa. Over two concerts in Delhi, three in Bombay and one each in Bangalore, Madras and Calcutta, the 'Woyaya' boys, (whom the critics would classify only as a minor group), drew thousands of cheering, shouting, feet-stomping spectators. When the group was 'unleashed' at New Delhi's Ashoka Hotel the pricetag for the cheapest ticket was Rs 500 and still the hall was full. At the concert at the India Gate Pavilion, the audience included Rajiv Gandhi, Arun Nehru, Arun Singh (all MPs) and Vivek Bharat Ram of the DCM group. In Madras, the concert almost led to a riot as hordes of over-enthusiastic fans flooded the stage. Within weeks, more than 40,000 copies of the LP *Osibisa-Hottest Hits* were sold out.

Until the Police concert no international rock group had given a public performance in India. Now, the floodgates have been suddenly opened. Three months after Osibisa came Wishbone Ash, the British heavy-rock band; a month later, (February 1982), the vaguely 'new wave' Boomtown Rats; and some months later, two fairly obscure groups: Classix Nouveaux and Hanoi Rocks. In February 1983, Wishbone Ash started on their second Indian tour. And now, there are strong rumours that Boney M, Abba, Jethro Tull, Stevie Wonder and others may tour India. In a space of just over 24 months, India seems to be developing into a recognized venue for international rock and pop concerts.

The spurt in rock music concerts comes from the initiative of a small, but probably growing, coterie of professional music promoters and a belated awareness from sponsoring companies that the affluent youth segment of the market is perhaps best reached through the music it loves. Pure Drinks' Osibisa binge shows both these trends. Introduced through a Rs 30-lakh media blitz in the newspapers, cinema slides, television sports and street hoardings, the Osibisa tour was obviously a marketing ploy to take Campa Cola to the youth segment, especially in Western and Southern India where Pure Drinks is a poor second to the market leaders. Charanjit Singh, Cong (I) MP and Managing Director, Pure Drinks, announced that he was starting a company to arrange promotional tours by foreign musicians, apparently in collaboration with Colin Brown, owner of a London casino. Singh promised to get Boney M and Donna Summer over for the inauguration of his New Delhi hotel, the Meridien. Those plans fizzled out and nothing has since been heard of Charanjit Singh's music promotion ambitions but music industry sources are confident that he is only 'keeping quiet' in the wake of embarrassing press and parliamentary questions.

Other lesser-known entrepreneurs have followed suite. Vikram Singh, a man with some connections with the princely Rajpipla family, founded a 'charitable trust' known as the

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Rock impresarios have apparently devised their own methods of by-passing RBI regulations.

Bombay Music Association (BMA) and brought Wishbone Ash and the Boomtown Rats to India. Another enterprising promoter is Yusuf Gandhi, 32, who describes himself as an 'administrator turned music promoter'. Gandhi, who is jazz key-board player Louis Banks' manager, had organised a festival of Indian rock groups in 1972. Later he also helped organise the Xavier's classical music festival, and was tour manager for Shakti in 1979-80. Last year he joined hands with Henry Tham, son of a Chinese restaurant owner, to start Arena Promoters. Unlike the BMA whose ostensible aim is 'charity', Arena Promoters' avowed aim is to bring foreign music to India for profit. It's maiden concert–by Hanoi Rocks–lost money because of counterfeit tickets and a lack of sponsors, but Yusuf Gandhi insists that within two-three years he will establish himself very well. "The success of The Police and Osibisa," Gandhi adds, "shows the tremendous potential for this business." Moreover it is a business that requires little investment–only contacts in the international music business and some legal dexterity.

The biggest obstacle to arranging international music concerts are regulations of the Reserve Bank of India according to which no foreign currency can be paid to foreign musicians performing in India. Further, organisers can only pay for the musicians' living and travelling expenses–they cannot give the group gifts or a nominal fee or even pocket expenses in Indian currency. Only when an organiser gives such an undertaking to the RBI can he obtain a license from the police to hold such a concert. In effect, this means that a group can perform in India 'only for the fun of it'.

The question of payment did not arise in the case of The Police and Kraftwerk concerts. The Police were on a year's world tour to take advantage of a tax exile. When they stopped over in Bombay they offered to play over AIR free. They were directed to the Time and Talents Club, a reputed trust, that has organised concerts by foreign musicians for the last 20 years. The aged Parsi ladies who run the club asked Niranjan Jhaveri, Honorary Secretary of Jazz India, to arrange the concert. The Police performed for 'charity' and HMV sponsored the publicity. Likewise Kraftwerk performed in India on a stop-over. HMV, who released their successful *Man Machine* album, claims to have only paid for the group's hotel expenses. Pure Drinks claimed that the Osibisa tour was financed by a 'London-based business house'. But they refused to give any further details. As one record company executive remarks, "Only a Charanjit Singh with all his influence could do it."

The other impresarios have apparently devised their own methods of by-passing RBI regulations. At least one group is known to have received 'gifts' in lieu of payment from the organisers. Another group is said to have been paid in dollars bought in black. Music organisers say that other modes of payment are through a foreign bank account or diversion of a company's export earnings. Though all these procedures are blatantly illegal, enforcement is unheard of. Hotels, for example, are known to pay musicians from their foreign exchange earnings without taking the RBI's permission.

Despite these alternatives no one can really afford to pay for a top international group. When they came to India The Police were reportedly demanding £50,000 a concert. Even Osibisa, who were well past their prime, demanded $ 12,000 a concert. Further, the cost of transporting the 27-member group, including eight musicians, 19 'roadies', one manager and the 28 tonnes of sound equipment from London was about £20,000. Since average gate proceeds from an international rock concert in India are only about one lakh rupees, it is hardly surprising that most of the groups who have performed here are relatively minor in the international context.

But, Rima Kashyap, Manager, Creative Services, HMV, says, "Many top music groups heading to the Far East or Australia may not mind performing free in India, if only for a paid holiday in our country."

Once a promoter has signed a group, he turns to a sponsor. Wishbone Ash and Boomtown Rats were sponsored by Golden Tobacco who are obviously looking for avenues to advertise their product without printing their statutory warning. Other sponsoring companies claim to be motivated by less crassly commercial interests. Boots (makers of Strepsils), who sponsored the publicity for Shakti, consider it part of 'corporate social responsibility'. "Or to put it in other words," says Anil Kapoor, Marketing Manager, "Some of us like music and believe that such concerts should be encouraged." Now Philips India are reportedly trying to organise concerts by Polydor artists who have an arrangement with the parent company in Holland. Philips sought to arrange an Indian tour by the American country group Seals and Croft, but later dropped the idea when it learnt that the group had played in South Africa. A Philips executive however, makes it clear that, "We will arrange such concerts only if the musicians agree to perform free. We will not try to twist regulations."

If a promoter ropes in a company to sponsor all expenses, it is estimated, he can easily make a profit of about one lakh rupees per concert. Legally the promoter directly claims 15% of the profits, the rest goes to 'charity', usually a trust floated by the promoter himself. The sponsoring company also establishes a progressive image amongst the English-speaking, and generally affluent, youth. With such spin-offs it seems certain that more entrepreneurs will enter the fray, whatever the legal obstacles. There is money in the business and the crowds are waiting. ♦

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BY MURLI DEORA

SAVE OUR CITIES

We cannot afford to neglect the urban middle class

IT WAS MAHATMA Gandhi who told us that the real India was in the villages and subsequent events have more than proved him right. The vast majority of our people live in the rural areas and agriculture remains the most common occupation. Because they have the number, the rural voters have always dominated the political scene and most of our important politicians were elected from rural constituencies.

It is therefore fitting that the government should regard rural affairs among its top priorities and necessary that the villages should be developed. No sensible person could possibly dispute this. However, as an essentially urban politician, I think it is only fair to point out that rural development must not be allowed to take place at the cost of the cities.

In terms of tax revenue the cities contribute far more to the national exchequer than the villages—72 per cent of Maharashtra's revenue comes from Bombay, for example and much of the country's wealth is created here. The industrial infrastructure that allows us to hold our own in today's world is located here. Our research, our development, the key to our progress—all of this is to be found in the cities. The more the country develops, the more important will be the role of the cities.

Unfortunately, the cities and the people who live in them have been neglected by successive governments. Because the villages have the power of numbers and therefore, the political clout, the problems of our cities have never been paid enough attention to.

One need only look at the city of Bombay to see what the result of this neglect has been. All development has been haphazard and ill-planned. Gigantic tower blocks have come up in areas that lack the civic infrastructure to cope with them. The public transport system cannot handle the loads placed on it. The air is so polluted that your eyes burn and sting. The water is even more polluted and is almost totally unfit for human consumption.

As with urban development, so it is with the urban dweller. Take the case of the average office worker in Bombay. Over the last decade, he has seen his standard of living drop alarmingly. His salary has gone up only marginally, while inflation has eaten into the value of the rupee in his pocket. A high rate of taxation, both direct and indirect, compulsory deposits, provident fund deductions and the like ensure that his take-home salary is so small that he cannot maintain his lifestyle.

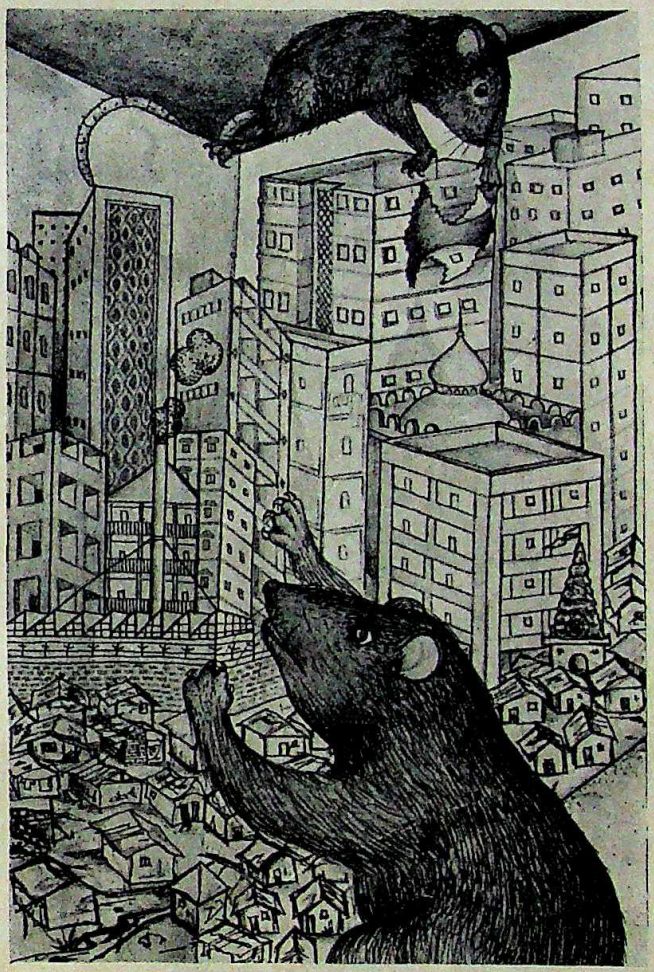
Of course, there are those who are even worse off. Slum dwellers and semi-employed transients, for instance. But my point is this: the urban middle class is, in many ways, the backbone of this country. Its members are educated, hard-working, largely honest, morally upright and too 'civilized' to agitate or to use force to get what they need. Unfortunately, they lack political clout because they are relatively small in number.

But it is this small number that throws up our administrators, our entrepreneurs, our scientists, our doctors and our teachers. The more the urban middle class finds itself neglected and its cities destroyed, the more disillusioned it gets. Its members look for jobs abroad or discard the middle class morality that keeps them honest and upright. And with the disillusionment of the middle class comes a breakdown in the country's development.

We have been right to concentrate on rural development. But we have been wrong to do this at the expanse of the city-dweller. If this country is to continue to create wealth, if it is to continue to produce some of the world's best professionals and if it is to develop a healthy, honest, democracy, then we cannot afford to neglect our cities.

We must take urgent steps to improve urban conditions and stem the haphazard growth inspired by speculators. And we should try and see that our economic and social policies take into account the interests of our city dwellers. ♦

Murli Deora is the President of the Bombay Region Congress Committee.



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Film Stars

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and Politics

If Amitabh Bachchan stood for election, our opinion poll shows that he would lose. But Hindi film stars have been involved with politics and politicians for much longer than is generally recognized.

IT HAD TO happen. When NT Rama Rao followed MG Ramachandran's lead and became the second film star to become chief minister of an Indian state, the implications for the Bombay film industry were clear. If regional idols could find political success in the South, couldn't the national heroes of the Hindi screen do even better? After all; only two kinds of people are widely recognized all over India—politicians and Hindi film stars. After Mrs Gandhi, Amitabh Bachchan must be the most widely known Indian alive today.

It seems logical for the Congress (I) to cultivate Bachchan and for the Gandhi family to regard him as a very special friend. As the idol of millions, Amitabh could easily top the achievements of an NTR or an MGR. He would be a natural politician.

Or would he?

An opinion poll commissioned by **Imprint** and carried out for us by Pathfinders: India, an independent marketing research organisation, shows that Bachchan's political charisma is over-rated. The poll shows that were he to stand for parliament from the Bombay north west constituency, where he lives, Amitabh would lose to sitting Member of Parliament (MP) Ram Jethmalani by a huge margin (51% for Jethmalani versus only 23% for Bachchan). It also shows that a majority of people in that constituency feel that film stars should not enter politics and that even if they do, they will make poor politicians. They do not object to Bachchan and Rajiv Gandhi being friends, but feel strongly against Rajiv taking Amitabh's help for his political campaigns. And worse still, for the Bachchan ego, they feel that of the Hindi movie stars, Dilip Kumar, not Amitabh, would make the best politician.

The results show the folly of trying to transfer the southern experience into the Hindi movie world. The Bombay audience may love its idols, but is discerning enough to realize that an angry young man does not an effective young politician make. In the circumstances, perhaps it is just as well that Bachchan has consistently played down any speculation that he will enter politics.

Of course, the results do not necessarily mean that Bachchan would also lose from a rural constituency with a largely illiterate electorate. And they do not negate the years of contact between politicians and film stars during which each helped the other in countless ways. The stars have received favours, censorship clearances, assistance in tax matters and official recognition, while the politicians have shared in the glamour of the movie business, have used the actors to raise funds for relief schemes and campaign chests and have sometimes even won elections because of the crowds that the stars have attracted for them. Moreover, several Hindi film stars have felt the urge to dabble in politics at some stage or the other and of course, many of them even formed their own political group—the National Party—in 1979, which was conspicuously unsuccessful.

IT ALL STARTED in 1957 when Krishna Menon chose north Bombay as his parliamentary constituency. To be sure, film personalities and politicians had met before and some of them (such as Mehboob Khan and Jawaharlal Nehru) were even friends. But it wasn't till the Krishna Menon campaign that the film industry really involved itself in politics. Recalls Dev Anand, "We believed in Menon. He was a great man. But he was a complete stranger to his constituency. He had just returned from abroad and used to address meetings in English. I think the stars swayed the electorate in his favour."

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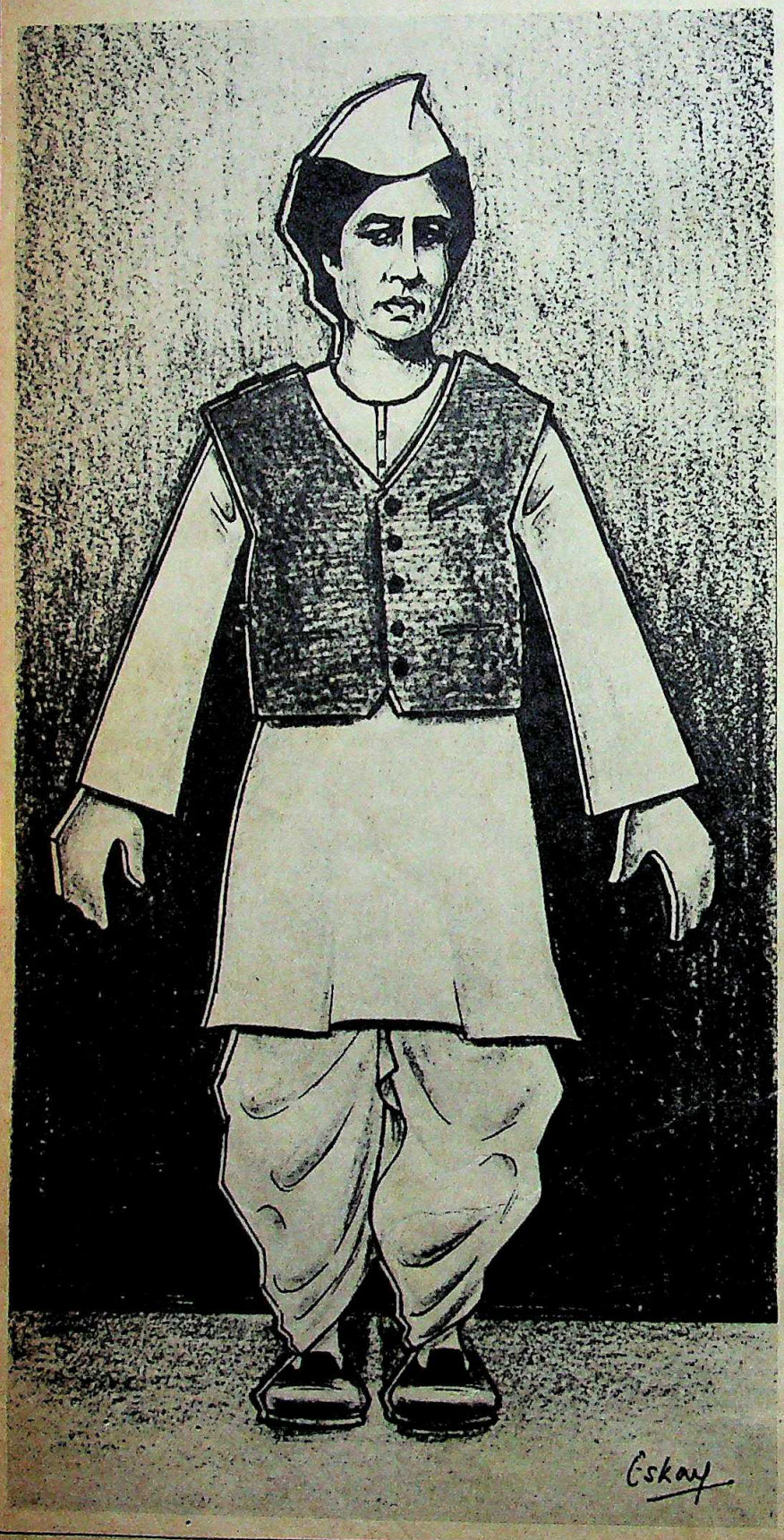
Can a film star easily switch roles to become a politician?



Among Menon's campaign organisers was film director Rajbans Khanna. It was Rajbans who realized that Menon on his own, would not pull in the crowds. He managed to collect together Bimal Roy, Raj Kapoor, Pran, BR Chopra, Dilip Kumar, Sohrab Mody and others. As each film personality got involved, he brought along his own friends. Dilip Kumar enlisted Johnny Walker, BR Chopra brought along brother Yash and the stars of his films and so on. The ploy worked. Each time Menon was to address a meeting, the film people would work the crowds first, warming them up for the finale of Menon's speech. The voters loved it and a crusty, tea-drinking, cantankerous politician was transformed into the popular MP for north Bombay.

In 1962, when Menon defended his seat against veteran Gandhian, JB Kriplani, the stars were back. Menon's campaign managers (including Rajbans and lawyer Rajni Patel) decided that the theme of the campaign was going to be Left (represented by Menon) versus Right (represented by Kriplani and his Congress supporters such as SK Patil). So while Kriplani was portrayed as being an 'agent of Right reaction', with suggestions that party bosses and Marwari industrialists were behind him, Krishna Menon became the 'man of the people'. Film stars, with their public popularity seemed the ideal vehicle to get this message across.

Balraj Sahni, a young Manoj Kumar, Ashok Kumar (remembered as being utterly committed to Menon's campaign), Dev Anand, Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar and several others became enthusiastic volunteers and toured the constituency, ceaselessly proclaiming their support for Menon's populist cause. Degrees of commitment, of course, varied. Many people involved in the campaign seem to remember that Raj Kapoor needed some persuasion before he stirred from his Chembur villa, while Dilip Kumar was perhaps the most tireless of the supporters. Recalls Rajbans Khanna, "There was one occasion, when after campaigning had officially ended, Dilip asked us if there was anything else he could do. We told him that we were nervous about a part of Mahim, where we felt that Menon might lose. It was too late to campaign, but Dilip said he'd see what he could do anyhow. He put on an armband saying 'volunteer' and visited nearly every flat in that area, climbing up and

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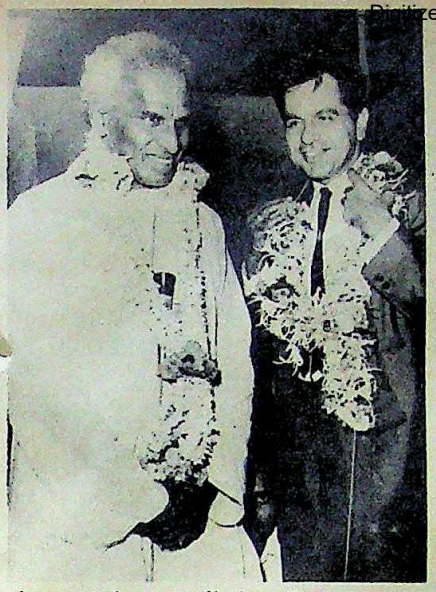

down staircases all day. Because campaigning had ended, he would not ask people to vote for Krishnaji. All he would say is, 'I've just come to remind you to vote!' It was enough. Everybody knew which side Dilip was on so they realized what he meant. And many of them were so overwhelmed by the fact that Dilip Kumar had visited their homes that they all turned out to vote for Menon."

Needless to say, Menon won again, this time by a huge margin. Significantly, in 1967 when Menon contested once more without any stars as part of his campaign, an obscure Congress politician called Barve defeated him handily.

WHAT MADE THE stars do it? Why did they suddenly immerse themselves so totally in political matters? Partly, it was commitment. Men like Dilip Kumar, Balraj Sahni and Ashok Kumar genuinely believed in Menon's cause. But for many of the others, it was the first opportunity they had to prove that they were more than mere *tamasha-wallahs* or jokers. For the first time, they were being taken seriously and their political opinions listened to. Recalls Rajbans, "I remember that late one night Raj Kapoor, BR Chopra, Dilip and myself were driving into Bombay from Poona having met Nehru there. We were all quite drunk and little concerned about being stopped by the police—this was the Prohibition era. Sure enough, after we'd entered the precincts of Bombay city, our car was stopped at a police checkpoint. As film stars were known to be flagrant violators of Prohibition laws, we felt certain we'd be arrested. Much to our surprise, the policeman who looked through the car window did not even notice we were drunk. 'You must be coming from a meeting,' he said, smiled and waved us on. I told the stars then that this was what their political involvement had done for them. Earlier, the policeman would have inferred that they were returning late from a drunken party. Now, with their enhanced stature, he assumed that they'd been out campaigning late."

Because of his support for Menon, Dilip Kumar was victimised.

For many stars, proximity to politicians also took care of their own interests or so they thought. In fact, some of them were in for a major disappointment. Once elected, Menon refused to help them in any way. Nor was Pandit Nehru more forthcoming. He entrusted the Information and Broadcasting Ministry to Dr Keskar who objected to the 'left-wing' stance of the stars and remained unsympathetic to their problems. When a delegation of Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar, BR Chopra, Bimal Roy and Rajbans went to see Nehru to ask for KD Malaviya as their minister, they were turned down. Instead Gopala Reddy, whose tenure in the Information Ministry was only distinguished by his dependence on civil servants, was appointed.

The stars had not realized that by embroiling themselves in politics, they ran the risk of making many important enemies. The attitude of the right-wing Dr Keskar helped many of them to recognize what they had got into and some actors quickly made their peace with all factions of the ruling party. One man who did not was Dilip Kumar and he spent the next decade paying for his folly. His first production *Ganga Jamuna* was brutally hacked by the censors on flimsy grounds, because several important politicians wanted to teach him a lesson. Then, he was accused of being a Pakistani spy without any real evidence. Shantilal Shah, a right-wing Morarji Desai protégé who was Home Minister of Maharashtra even had him raided on espionage charges. Later, Morarji's Finance Ministry kept up the persecution. Though he was widely regarded as being among the poorer stars in the film industry (because he made only one film a year), income tax authorities filed several complicated suits against him that took nearly ten years to settle. (Ironically, the cases were finally disposed off by two other politicians: NKP Salve and Rajni Patel.)

DESPITE THE MANY problems that Dilip Kumar's political involvement caused him, there was a silver lining. The Menon campaigns elevated him in stature to a level that none of his contemporaries had reached. He maintained this stature by acting as though he was more than a mere film star and today, the years of effort have paid off. As the **Imprint**–Pathfinders poll shows, the electorate still regards him as the best potential politician among the stars.

In 1963 he even managed to publicly win the affection of Pandit Nehru. At a Congress meeting in Delhi that year, Dilip was billed to appear on the same platform as Nehru. The police, fearful of the pandemonium that would undoubtedly follow Dilip's arrival, asked him not to enter till the Prime Minister had been seated on the dais, so that they could ensure Nehru's safety. When Dilip did appear, Panditji had already begun speaking. The crowd recognized Dilip as he tried to sneak

(Continued on page 22)

Dev Anand congratulates Krishna Menon after his election victory.

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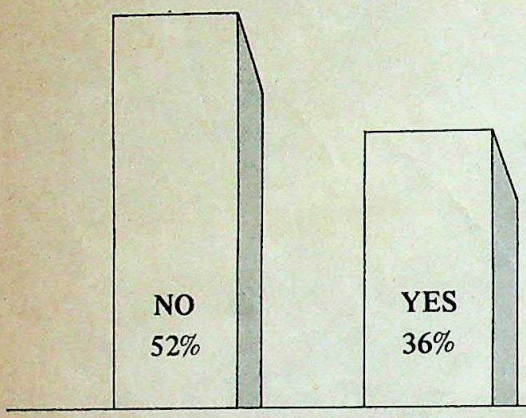
THE RESULTS OF THE POLL

Imprint commissioned Pathfinders:India to conduct an opinion poll in the Bombay north west constituency to find out how people felt about film stars joining politics.

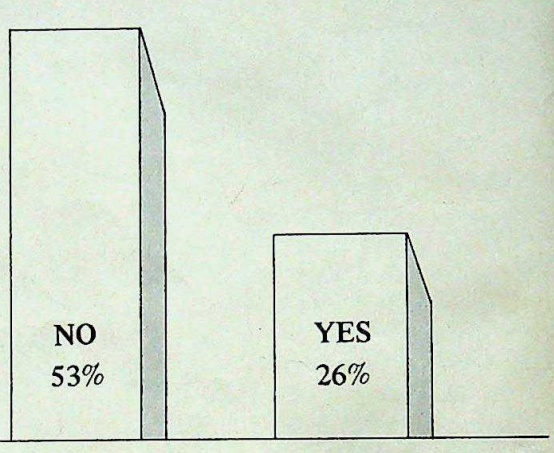
Pathfinders interviewed 207 voters from all walks of life to obtain an accurate picture of the voting climate in that constituency. Most film stars (including Amitabh Bachchan) live in north west Bombay.

Should film stars enter politics?



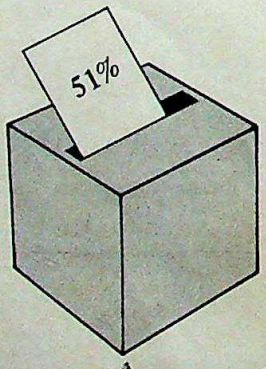
The majority was against film stars entering politics, though 12 per cent said that they couldn't decide either way.

Would film stars make successful politicians?

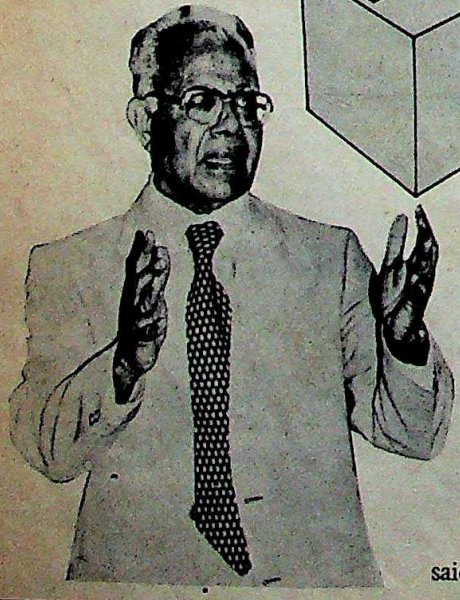


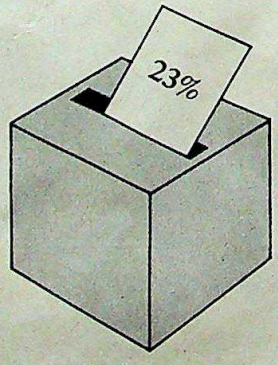
Over half the respondents believed that film stars would not make successful politicians. A relatively high proportion (21 per cent) said they couldn't say.

Who would you prefer as your next MP?



Ram Jethmalani





Amitabh Bachchan

Despite speculation to the contrary, the poll shows that Ram Jethmalani (the current Member of Parliament for the constituency) would easily defeat Amitabh Bachchan were the star to stand.

Sixteen per cent said that they would vote for neither candidate while ten per cent said that they didn't know how they would vote.

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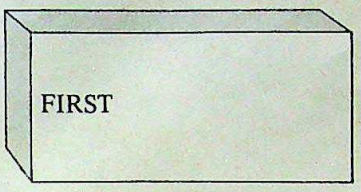
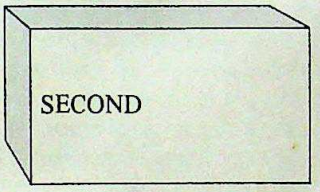
Which of the following would you vote for?

DILIP KUMAR



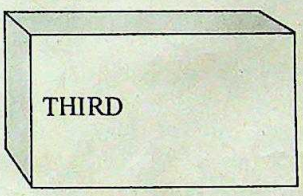
Regarded as the best potential politician.

AMITABH BACHCHAN



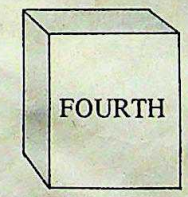
Not taken as seriously as Dilip Kumar.

SUNIL DUTT



A very close third to Bachchan.

DEV ANAND

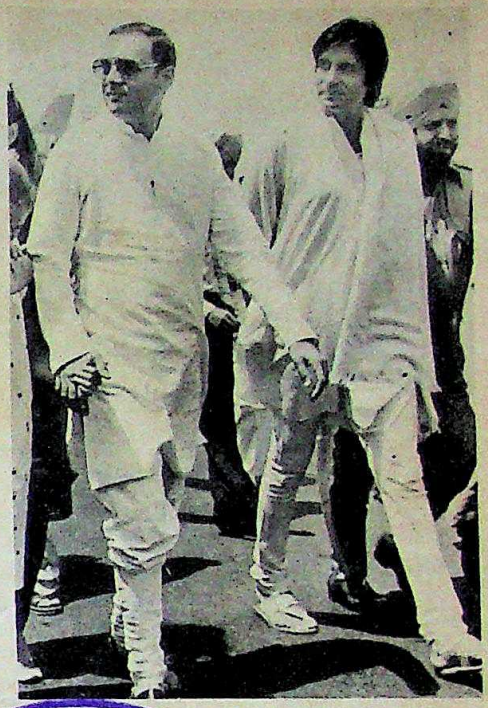


Preferred by very few respondents.

SHATRUGHAN SINHA

Clearly not in the running at all.

Respondents were given the names of five film stars and asked which of the stars they would vote for (in order of preference) in the event of a parliamentary election.



Amitabh-Rajiv relationship—good or bad?

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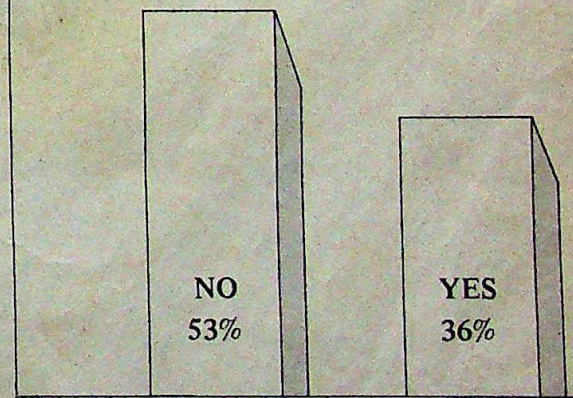
Should Rajiv seek Amitabh's help?



Respondents felt that Amitabh and Rajiv Gandhi were welcome to be friends but disapproved of any political involvement.

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(Continued from page 19)
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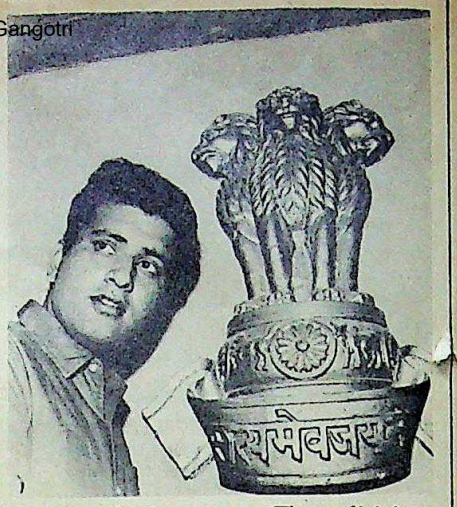
on to the dais and began clapping and cheering. The cheers were so loud that they completely drowned out the Prime Minister's speech. Nehru stopped, turned around, saw what the commotion was about and made a sudden decision. For a second, others on the dais feared a flash of the famous Nehru temper but instead, the Prime Minister walked upto Dilip, embraced him warmly and led him to the front of the stage, holding his hand high. The film industry, had clearly, arrived.

It was this sort of recognition that many of the other stars sought. Throughout the second half of the '60s, there was a steady stream of stars to Delhi. They had film premieres to donate to political charities and were only too willing to raise funds or to campaign for any deserving cause. When Lal Bahadur Shastri became Prime Minister and announced that his slogan was *Jai Jawan, Jai Kissan* Manoj Kumar proclaimed that he would make a film *Upkaar* on that theme. He flew to Delhi, invited Shastri to the premiere of *Shaheed* his film about Bhagat Singh and since then, has managed to portray himself as the embodiment of every patriotic cliche ever written.

In the late '60s Nargis and Sunil Dutt were friends of the Mohans of Mohan Meakin Breweries. The Mohans had close links with the Gandhis (especially Sanjay) and were only too willing to introduce the Dutts to them. At that time, there was talk of building a film studio near Delhi in which both the Dutts and the Mohans would be involved. Nothing came of the scheme, but Sunil Dutt made his debut into political circles. Later, as his career went into a nose-dive, he kept himself in the public eye only by ensuring that the government kept inviting him and his Ajanta Arts troupe to entertain the armed forces or to perform at public functions. In 1971 the Dutts campaigned for Mrs Gandhi's Congress as did Dara Singh and Mahendra Kapoor. The Kapoor family also offered its assistance. Slowly but surely, the links between Bombay's film world and Delhi's political circuit, were being established.

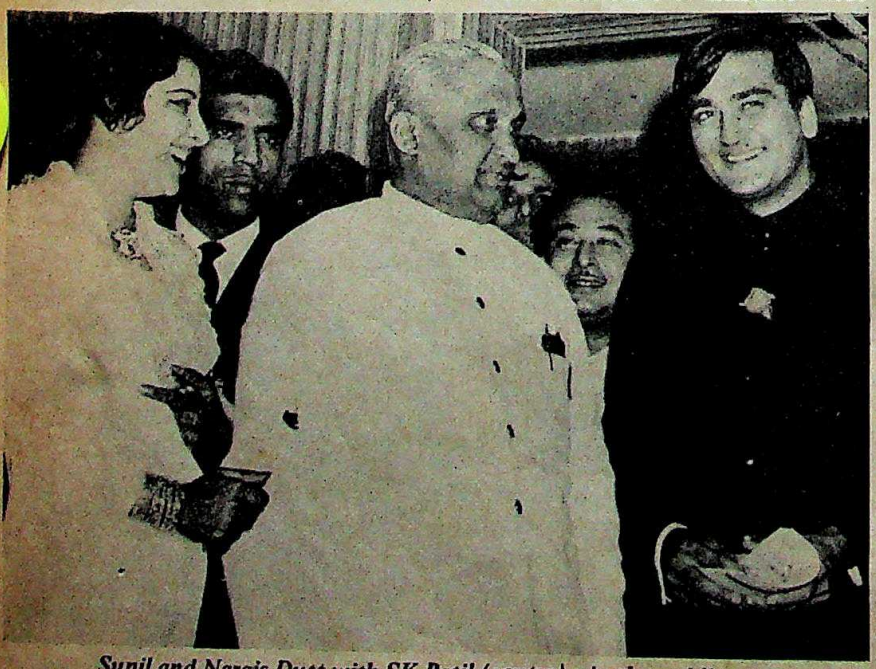
Manoj Kumar became the embodiment of every patriotic cliche.



BY THE '70s though, whatever ideological component there may have been to the links in the Krishna Menon days, had largely vanished. As Indian politics became more ideologically ambiguous, the relationships between stars and politicians became murkier. Clearly, many of the film people were still in it for the recognition but now there were other motives. They wanted entertainment tax exemptions, the withdrawal of income tax cases or assistance with unsympathetic censors. The politicians too, seemed to have forgotten the crowd-pulling ability of the stars. They were rarely invited to campaign and when they were called, they were not properly utilized. For many of the newer politicians, film stars were attractive only because they were glamorous and could provide alcohol and women. Only in Bombay did Rajni Patel use his close friendship with Dilip Kumar to organize processions of stars to raise funds whenever there was a drought or a famine.

This trend continued through the Emergency. To Information and Broadcasting Minister, VC Shukla, the film industry represented no more than a source of easy money and cheap sex. Producers found that to get censorship clearances, permission to shoot abroad or even the raw stock that went into their cameras, they had to pay off officials in cash or kind. The VC Shukla stories are well known. At a meeting of producers in 1975, he berated Ramanand Sagar for daring to release the posters of his *Charas* before the censors could clear the film. The film would now be banned, Shukla announced. By the next morning, Shukla had changed his mind. The film industry had no idea what blandishments Sagar had provided to make Shukla relent in the course of a single night, but it could guess.

Shukla's womanizing ways soon became common knowledge. At a film festival, he made a pass at actress Vidya Sinha and stories about his dalliances with other stars are still retold by film people. But his susceptibility to women made it easy for producers to bribe him. GP Sippy, the producer of *Sholay* is even reported to have arranged for a star aspirant called Candy to minister to Shukla's needs.



Sunil and Nargis Dutt with SK Patil (centre) : in the public eye.

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It was during the Emergency course, that the *Kissa Kursi Ka* episode took place and Sanjay Gandhi and Shukla were later accused of having burned the print of Amrit Nahata's satirical film.

Emergency-era politicians liked the easy money and cheap sex.

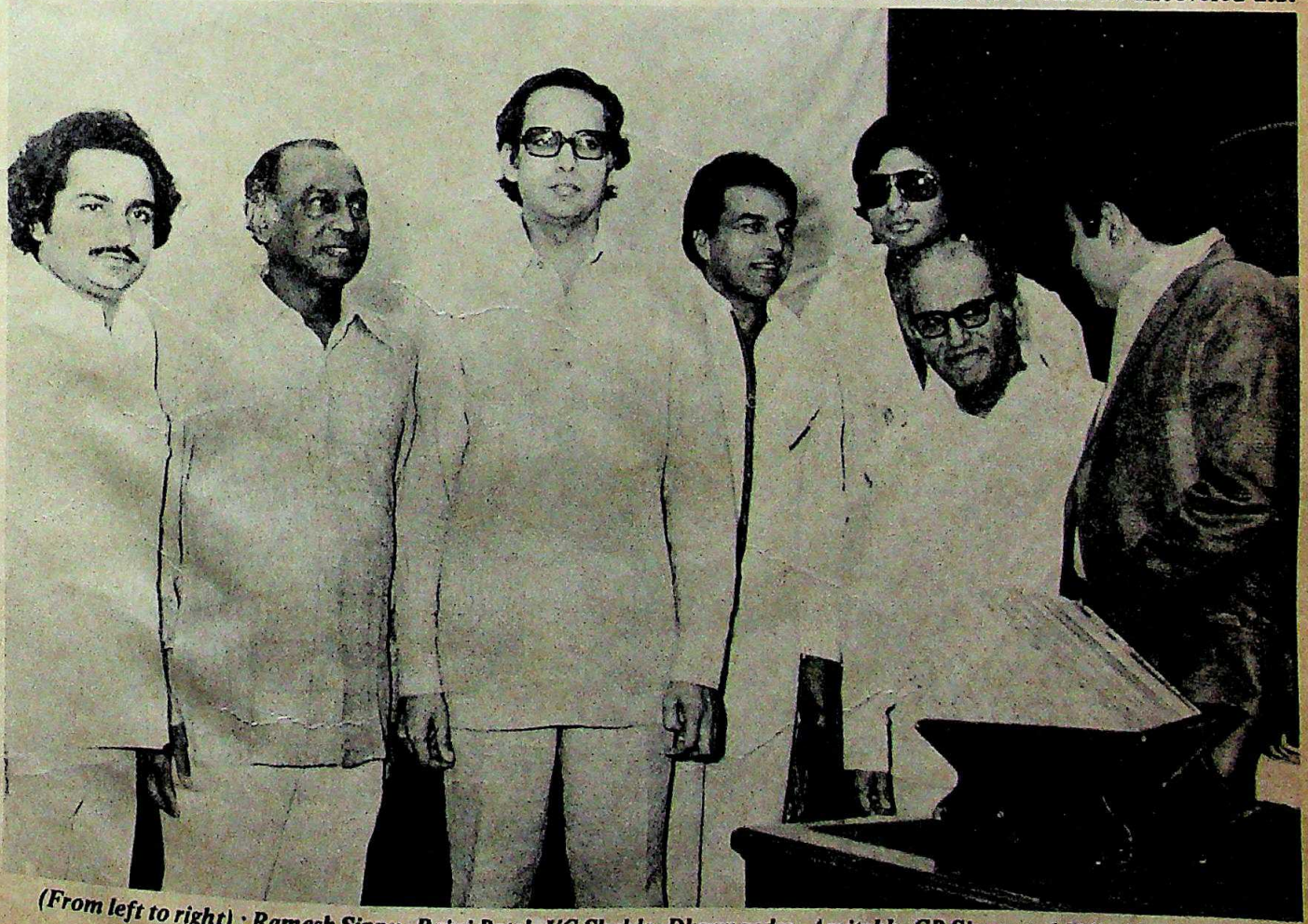
THE FIRST INDICATION that ideology was once again going to play some part in film-politics relationships came with the announcement of the 1977 elections. Dev Anand, Shatrughan Sinha and Amol Palekar announced that they were opposed to Mrs Gandhi's regime and campaigned openly for the Janata Party. The sceptics maintained that they were only complaining because they had themselves suffered during the Emergency. But of the three, only Dev Anand had been adversely affected by the Emergency and even he maintains, "Yes, I was harassed but this made me realize that if I, who is a somebody in this country, could be made to suffer so much, what happens to the millions who are nobodies? You could say I was motivated by a personalised perspective, not by selfishness."

All three stars were taking a considerable personal risk by coming out in the open. At the time, it seemed probable that Mrs Gandhi's Congress would win the elections and there was the possibility of official retribution. "I wasn't naive enough to believe that I wouldn't pay for my involvement with the opposition after the Emergency. But at the time, I wasn't worried about it," says Amol Palekar. "I was doing it from my own conviction—not to seek favours or to hit back at anyone."

The Congress Party had its usual supporters campaigning for it but this time, they were less successful. Dilip Kumar and Johnny Walker went to Uttar Pradesh in 1977 and did their best to re-awaken enthusiasm for Mrs Gandhi's regime. But from all accounts, Dilip's heart was not in it—his mentor Rajni Patel had been victimized by Sanjay Gandhi—and the crowd was less than responsive. When Dilip tried to lead his audience through the usual chorus of *Desh Ki Neta—Indira Gandhi*, he found an unusual response. The crowd would shout back 'Saira Banu'. Later, when he attempted a political speech, somebody yelled, *'Gaana gaao'*.

After Mrs Gandhi had been defeated, Dilip is reported to have sworn off campaigning forever. The new heroes were the Janata stars. Says Amol Palekar, "Jayprakash Narayan invited me to Delhi for the swearing-in ceremony of the new government but I refused to go." Shatrughan and Dev however, did go to Delhi, and were mobbed at every meeting.

But history repeated itself. Just as the stars who had believed in Krishna Menon's cause found that no favours were forthcoming from their mentor, the Janata stars were also in for a shock. Dev Anand had placed all his hopes on *Des Pardes*, a film about immigrants to the United Kingdom. He was shattered when he discovered that



(From left to right) : Ramesh Sippy, Rajni Patel, VC Shukla, Dharmendra, Amitabh, GP Sippy and Dilip Kumar at the Sholay premiere.

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Shatrughan's chamchas *said he would be Chief Minister of Bihar.*

under the Janata government's censorship policy, the film would get an 'Adults Only' certification because part of the action took place in a pub. He went to Delhi, pleaded his case and was turned down.

As always, it was the people who had no ideological affinity with politics who prospered. Actor Sanjay Khan became a close friend of the new Industries Minister, George Fernandes and even claimed that as they were both brought up in Bangalore, they came from similar backgrounds. For his part, Fernandes happily dispensed with his much proclaimed hatred of five star culture and let Khan throw massive parties in his honour at Sanjay's Juhu Villa. What he discussed with the likes of Ranjeet and Zaherra at such gatherings, must remain a matter of speculation.

WHEN THE JANATA government fell, people like Sanjay Khan kept a low profile. Instead, it was left to Dev Anand to suggest that film stars enter politics not just as campaign attractions but as candidates.

"We realized that the country needed a new alternative—a new slogan," Anand explains. "We felt that all our political leaders had let the people down. So we decided to form our own party." It is not clear whose idea the National Party originally was but Anand soon became its spokesman and later, its official leader. At a press conference in the Crystal Room of Bombay's Taj Mahal Hotel, a veritable Who's Who of the industry lauded the party's objectives: Shreeram Bohra, Gulshan Rai, GP Sippy, Ramanand Sagar, IS Johar and Tarachand Barjatya.

As the campaign continued others promised their support—among them Manoj Kumar, Rajesh Khanna and Dharmendra. The party spoke in terms of putting up 300 candidates and Shatrughan Sinha's *chamchas* suggested that he could well be the next Chief Minister of Bihar. Dev Anand's argument was simple, "A film-maker knows what the masses want. He makes films for them, so, he can gear his policies towards them and win elections."

In the event, this hypothesis was never tested. First of all, Manoj Kumar opted out. Then the producers began to get cold feet. And predictably, the film people began fighting within themselves. Some of them questioned Anand's leadership and others thought

The inauguration of the National Party: Dev Anand (centre) flanked by Justice Chagla (left), Nani Palkhivala (right).

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The North-South Divide

Hindi film stars lack the political clout of their southern counterparts.

THERE ARE TINSEL gods all over India. But it is only those from the South—namely MGR and NTR, who have risen to positions of political power. No Hindi film star has won an election seat let alone occupy a position of power. This itself shows the remarkable difference between the film industry in the south and in the north and the political consciousness and psychology of the respective audiences.

But any analysis of this north-south cleft would go awry if MGR and NTR were to be clumped together in the same category. MGR is a part of an established ideological (Dravida) movement and was actively involved in the affairs of the Dravida Munnetra Kazgham (DMK) years before he took the plunge for power; NTR has no such background. In fact only eight months before he rode to power he had no political connections to speak of.

Still, it can be safely said that the Hindi film star dabbling in politics operates in an environment quite different from his southern counterpart. Firstly the latter has the advantage of a homogeneous, regional audience. Hindi film stars have no such strong regional roots—the typical Hindi film is based on no real geographical and cultural milieu. Thus while a NTR and his films speak to the Andhras, an Amitabh Bachchan or a Dilip Kumar has to cater to Punjabis, Bengalis, Maharashtrians, Kashmiris, Kannadigas and a score of other regional audiences. In other words if Amitabh Bachchan enters politics he will have to talk only about national issues and not just the injured pride of a particular people or the glory of a particular language, as NTR and MGR did.

Just as the Hindi film audience is complex and diversified so is the Hindi film industry itself a divided house. One recent instance proves the point. The income tax swoop on Hindi film stars after the Andhra elections left the entire industry shaken and angry but no organized protest materialized. As BK Karanjia, Editor, *Screen* remarks, "When the industry cannot join hands and fight for its own survival what is the chance that it will join together to oppose the government?" Of course the industry would like to believe otherwise. At a meeting held after the income tax raids some producers spoke of 'declaring war on the Cong (I) with all the resources at our command' and 'showing the government that if NTR and others can do it we too can'. There was even some talk of reviving a kind of National Party. Needless to say nothing came out of all this wild talk. Said Shreeram Bohra, President of the Indian Motion Picture Producers Association later, "The film industry in the South is more politically conscious. Here almost everyone is a coward."

But it is perhaps not so simple as all that. Even if any major Hindi film star plunges into politics today it is doubtful whether he will be able to repeat NTR's success. Several Hindi film stars have campaigned for different politicians at different times but their impact has at best been marginal. Adds Shreeram Bohra, "To attract votes one needs a party and a programme." Hindi film stars have neither. All of them who have dabbled in politics have done little beyond talking of platitudes like the unity of the nation, the population explosion.

Only MGR and NTR capitalized on their screen image to propogate a specific alternative and a specific programme (however populist). NTR promised to retrieve the injured pride of his people, MGR promised cheap rice and free meals for children. Indeed the one common factor in the NTR and the MGR campaigns was that they went about their business not primarily as film stars but as seasoned politicians with catchy slogans. That seems to be the clue to their electoral triumphs. In politics as in films, success lies in catching the public imagination. ♦

that the party's policies (such as they were) had not been properly thought out.

Anand went on, regardless. He invited non-film luminaries like Ramakrishna Bajaj, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Nani Palkhivala and MC Chagla to a mammoth rally at Shivaji Park and printed posters announcing the participation of several major stars. Many of them (such as Rajesh Khanna) did not turn up but enough did (Amjad Khan, Hema Malini, Shatrughan Sinha and Reena Roy) for the rally to be a great success.

It augured well for the party but at that stage, the infighting finally overtook the commitment and the party collapsed. It put up no candidates at all and dissolved itself a few weeks before the elections. Looking back, Dev Anand has this to say, "We entered politics in the heat of the moment. We soon realised that politics requires full dedication, money and organization. We had very little experience and time, just four to six weeks to raise funds and a grass-roots organization."

The tragedy of the National Party was that it discredited film star-politicians before they were even put to the test. Some of the party's candidates may well have won. But as it turned out, the collapse of the organization before any nomination papers were filed, meant that this was never established.

ONE STAR WHO the National Party did not even bother to approach was Amitabh Bachchan. Almost from the time he entered the film industry in 1969, Bachchan's connections with the Gandhi family had been well publicised. His parents had been friends of the Gandhis in their Allahabad days and his brother Ajitabh was a close friend of Sanjay. Amitabh himself, was a friend of Rajiv though their relationship does not seem to have been particularly close then.

In the post-1974 period when Bachchan became a big star, rumours to the effect that his success had been orchestrated by the Prime Minister's office, began to gain currency. This was, of course, quite incorrect. The producers who signed him up for his first film (KA Abbas and Hrishikesh Mukherjee) did so without any political prompting and later (1971-73), when Amitabh hit a lean patch, there was no question of the PM's office stepping in. His political

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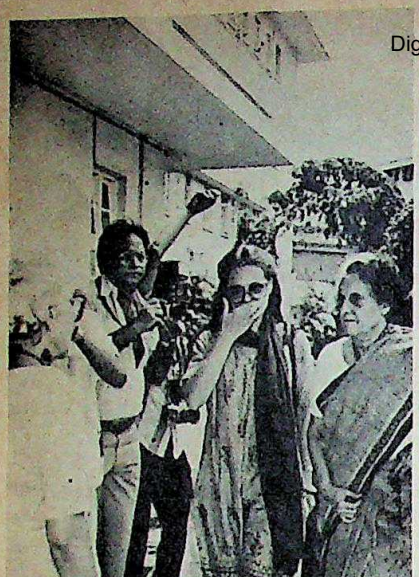


connections have helped his career only in the sense that his films never face censorship trouble. And now, no income tax officer would dare raid him.

Throughout the '70s, the Gandhi-Bachchan relationship remained strictly non-political. The families attended each other's weddings and the mothers met regularly. It is now rumoured that Sanjay's money was given to Amitabh for safekeeping, but this seems unlikely. Sanjay was far more likely to know how to invest it abroad and during the Janata regime, Amitabh, like all stars, was a prime candidate for a tax raid.

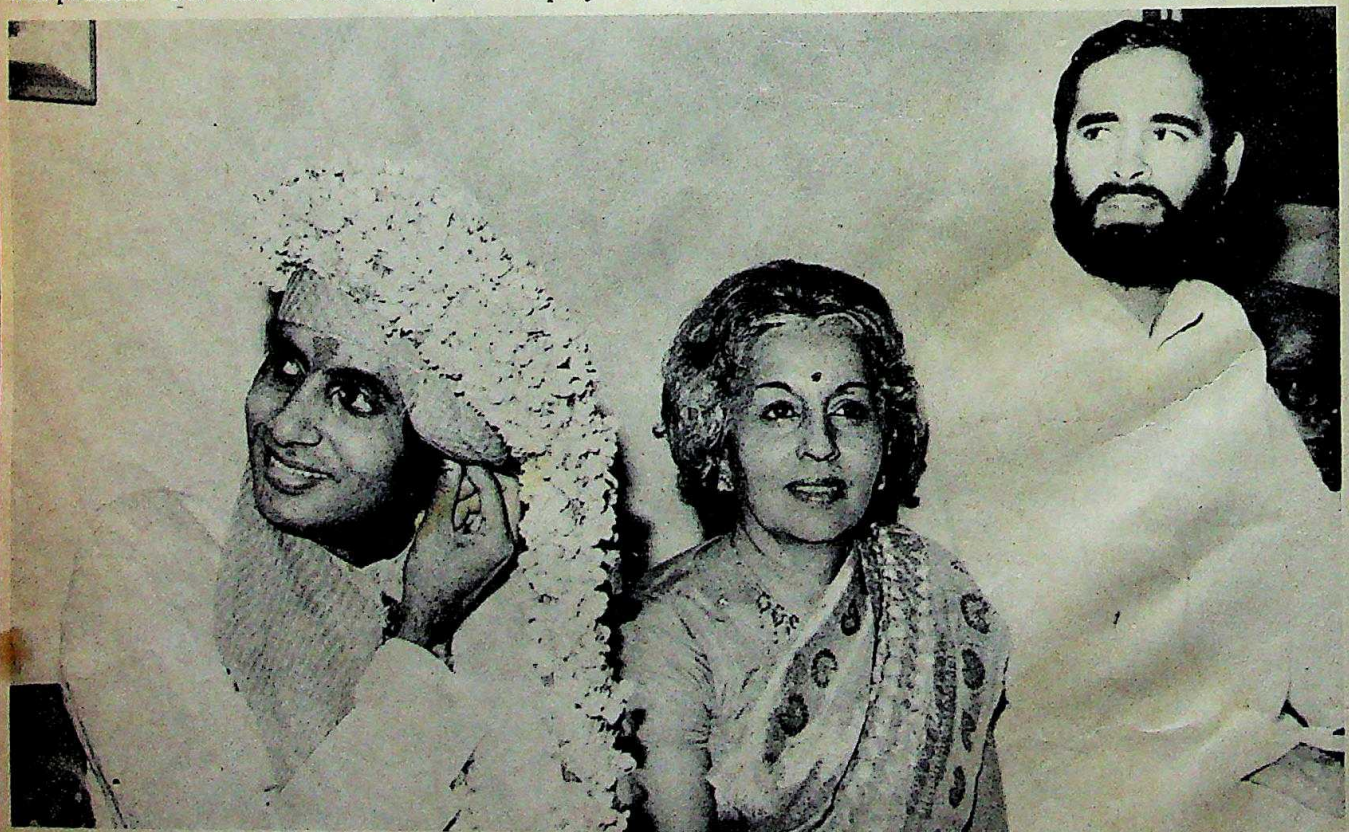
It is rumoured that the Gandhi money was given to Amitabh for safekeeping.

It was after Sanjay's death in 1980 that the Bachchans and Rajiv Gandhi seem to have moved closer to each other. Ajitabh would drive Rajiv all over town and Amitabh was often seen with the new heir-apparent. Bachchan's accident and brush with death in 1982 seem to have cemented the relationship. Mrs Gandhi flew down to Bombay to visit him at Breach Candy hospital and Rajiv cut short his US trip on hearing of Amitabh's condition. During an extended convalescence in Delhi (at the time of the Asiad), Amitabh's many public appearances in the company of the Gandhis led to speculation that he was joining politics. When NT Rama Rao won the Andhra Pradesh elections it seemed logical for the Congress (I) to draft Bachchan as its own film star. So far, Amitabh has denied that he will join politics in nearly every interview. But then, as the sceptics point out, that was what Rajiv said almost to the moment when he filed his nomination papers from Amethi.

THE CONGRESS'S RETURN to power did not faze some Janata supporters. Sanjay Khan dropped George Fernandes and latched on to young, fun-loving, Karnataka Chief Minister, Gundu Rao. Once again, the Bangalore connection was trotted out and 'we-knew-each-other-in-our-youth' became the refrain.

Unlike many other stars with political links, both Sanjay Khan and his brother Feroze have always managed to extract favours from politicians. Feroze placed a vulgar full page advertisement in the newspapers when Sanjay Gandhi died addressed to 'My Sleeping Prince' (sic), and in return for such ostentatious displays of sycophancy, was never troubled by the censors or the income tax authorities.

Sanjay got even more. His tasteless extravaganza *Abdullah* was passed by the censors (who obligingly held up



Sanjay Gandhi at Amitabh's wedding : non-political relationship.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MUKESH PARPIANI (THE DAILY)

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Dev Anand's *Lootmaar* so that Sanjay could take the cinema Anand had reserved for his film) and his Bombay premiere boasted of such political bigwigs as Gundu Rao and AR Antulay. During the speech that preceded the show, Gundu Rao announced that Karnataka would exempt the film from entertainment tax. Then, he turned to Antulay and urged Maharashtra to follow suit. Trapped on the dais, Antulay fumbled uneasily and then, granted the exemption.

Later, Sanjay got more ambitious. He used his political contacts to secure the agency for all advertisement sites at the Asiad. Had all gone well, he stood to make a crore or so. Unfortunately for him Meetco, his Dubai-based associates fell out with the Indian government and the deal ended in litigation.

These days Sanjay seems to have decided that Maneka Gandhi is going to be influential in the future. Accordingly, he is spending rather a lot of time with Akbar 'Dumpy' Ahmed.

Sanjay and Gundu Rao trapped Antulay at the Abdullah premiere.

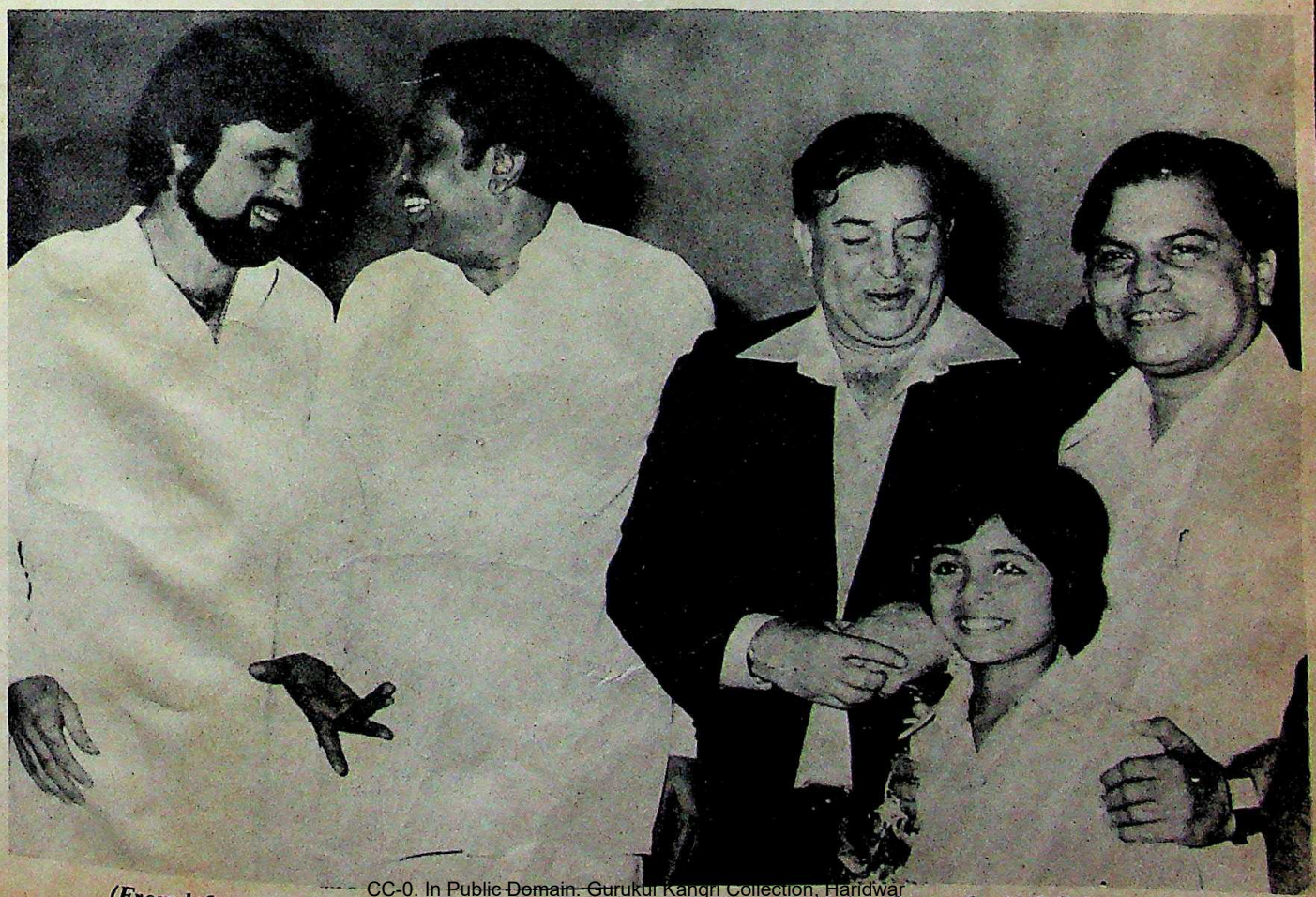
THE LINKS BETWEEN politics and Hindi films go back nearly 25 years. But whereas earlier, politicians tended to believe that stars could draw crowds but not win elections, they are not so sure now. The success of MG Ramachandran in Tamilnadu had always been explained away in terms of the DMK's tradition of combining films and politics. However, NTR's sudden rise to political prominence has caused a rethinking of many attitudes. NTR had no political base at all and yet he sailed to victory simply because his was a familiar face.

According to many Congress Party organizers, a star like Amitabh could easily recreate his on-screen persona for the benefit of the voters. Some reports have it that Bachchan is slated to oppose Ram Jethmalani in the Bombay north west constituency, because the Congress feels that his man-of-the-people image would go down well with the slum dwellers of that area. As our poll shows, this is wishful thinking.

But could Hindi film stars succeed in politics? Many observers feel that they couldn't. Says Rauf Ahmed, editor of *Movie* magazine, "While South Indian stars have used their popularity to capitalize on matters close to the people's hearts, matters they themselves believed in, Bombay's stars have dabbled in politics only as stars, not as politicians. Everybody knows what MGR and NTR stand for. But who knows what any Bombay star believes in?"

To observers like Ahmed, the film-politics connection has ensured mutual benefit for both sides. The more mercenary stars have received favours while the politicians have exploited the stars' crowd-pulling abilities. But that is where the nexus ends. Just as it would be absurd to talk of politicians becoming actors, it makes no sense to regard Bombay's stars as potential leaders.

The **Imprint**-Pathfinders poll supports this view. But the true test of its validity will be the events of the next two years. ♦



(From left to right) : Sanjay Khan with Gundu Rao, Raj Kapoor and Antulay at the **Abdullah** *premiere.*

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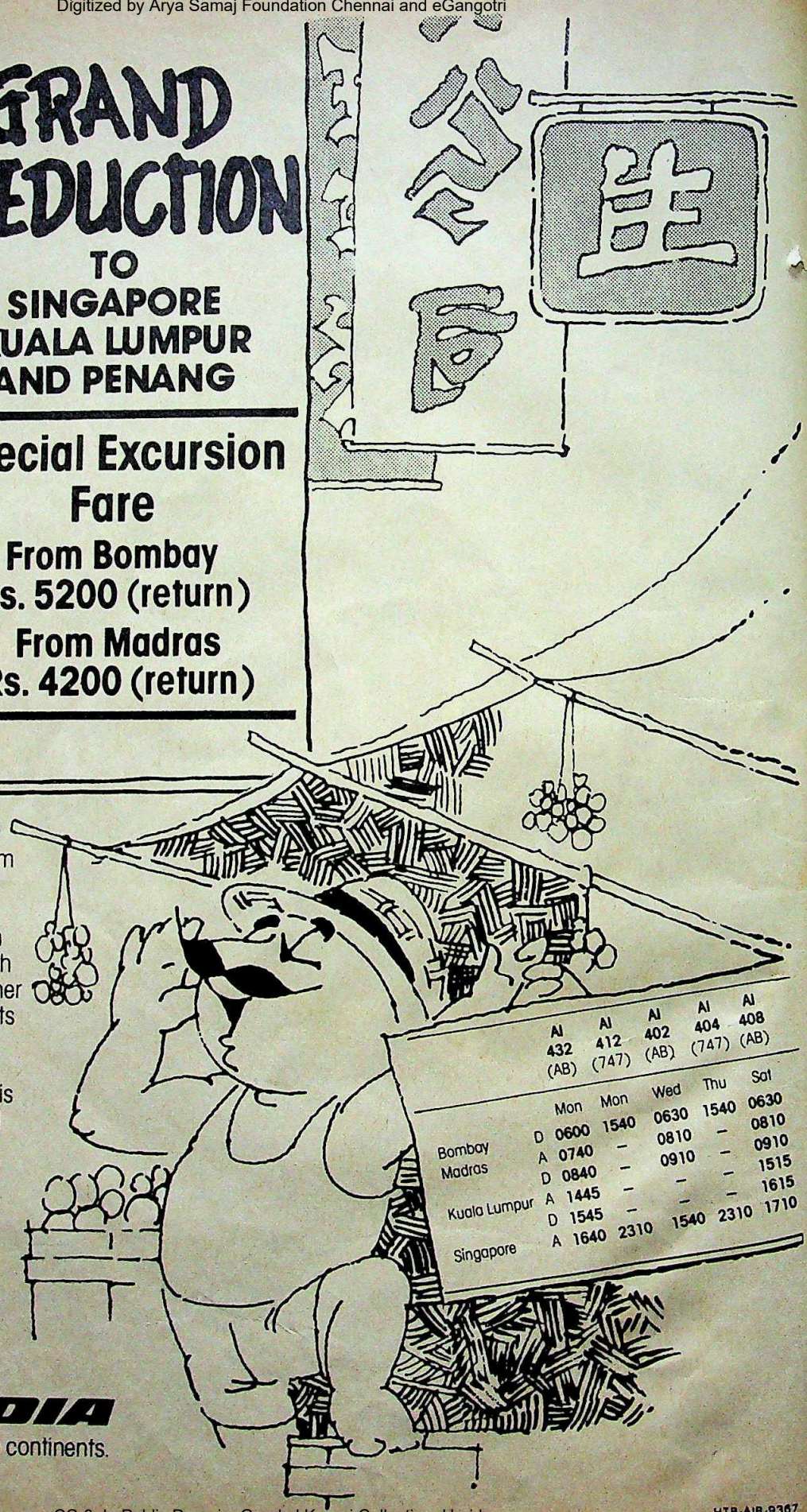

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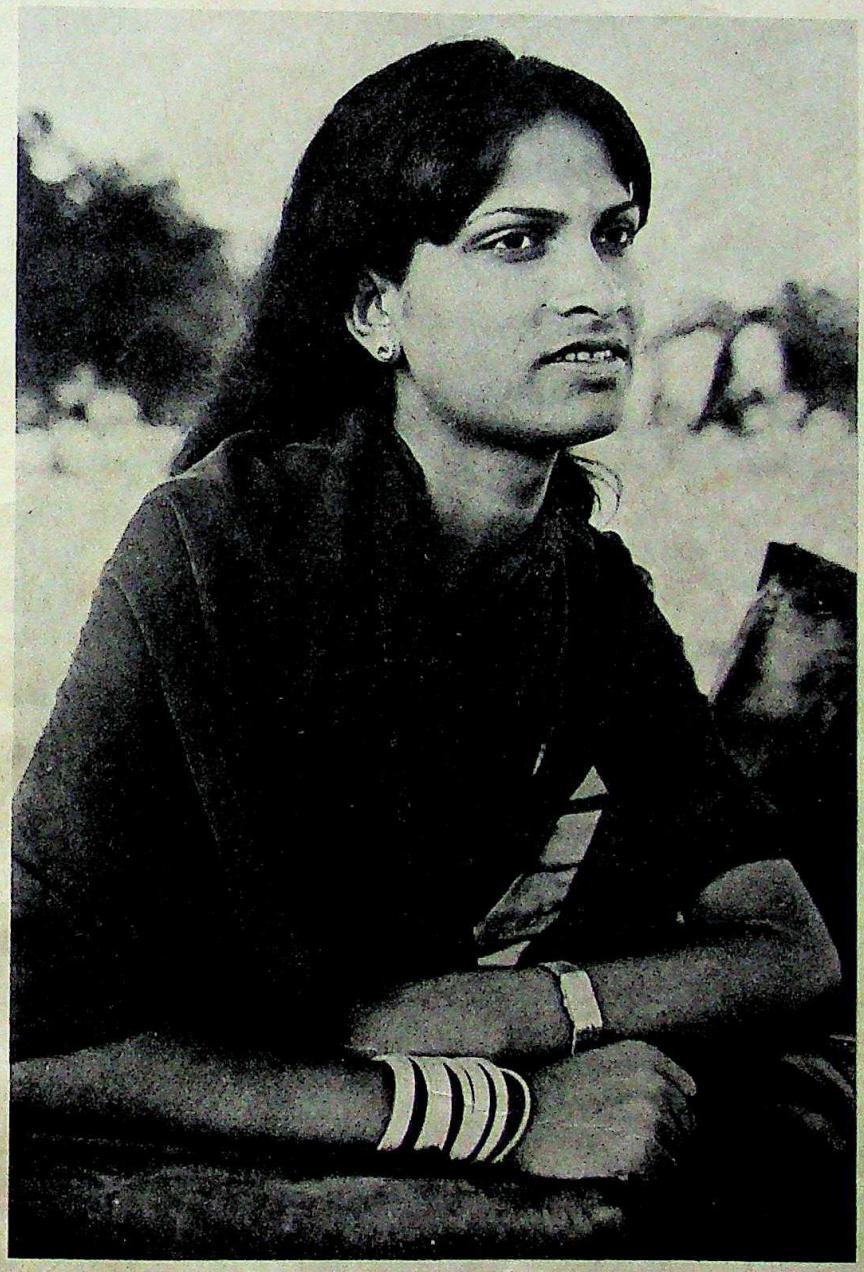
PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG HIJRA

By Sunaina Lowe



LATA STANDS ON one side of Pahela Galli, off Sukhlaji Street, in her yellow georgette sari with the silver embroidery and the one rupee ear-studs she bought at Grant Road shining with a deceptive glitter in her ear lobes. She taps her foot impatiently as she waits for her next customer, thinking all the while that in two days time she will be going home to Hyderabad. Going back after nearly ten years. What is her family going to think of her? The last time they saw her she was a little boy of ten. She smooths down the bangs on her cheeks and flicks back her shoulder length hair in an unconscious gesture of nervousness.

All around her the carnival of Pahela Galli is gearing up for another crazy night. The street is overrun with flam-

Sunaina Lowe is on the staff of Imprint. Her last article was on the feminist wave in Delhi.

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He would not share her, he said, come and keep house for me.

ing colours–bright orange, startling almost luminous pink, parrot green with shimmering purple. The whores and the *hijras* are resplendent and the customers in their ordinary nine-to-five dull browns and blues fade into the background. Five little girls in bright red ribbons and cheap, pink nylon dresses stand in a line, their painted red mouths frozen in an almost identical expression of boredom and bewilderment. Taxis and cars come and go, picking up girls or depositing clients. Three drunk men with their arms around each other, in enormous flared trousers, their bottoms squeezed tight by the fabric, lurch towards a staircase and a room that they obviously know well. Somebody's gramophone provides a sound-track of filmi hits.

The *hijras* are in their element parading up and down the street with the exaggerated strut of a striptease artiste, calling out raucously to each other, letting their *pallavs* trail on the ground and pushing out their chests.

One of them is playing up to a group of customers around her. It is Sheela. Lata watches her prance and preen for the men. "Stupid bitch," she thinks, *"Kaise heroine ban ke ayee hai."* Sheela pulls down the swooping neckline of her flame orange maxi and adjusts it around her carefully contrived 38-inch bustline. She swings her hair, curled seductively over her shoulder, and laughs with her painted mouth wide open as one of them grabs her arm. Her face is powdered to an even whiteness and she looks like Mumtaz in her *Apna Desh* heyday. Sheela walks jauntily towards Lata, trailing the men behind her and Lata turns away, sick with memories of a time when for her too, the attentions of men had been more than a just a means of making a living.

Four years ago Lata had fallen in love. He was a young tea shop owner, who lived a few houses away from the *hijra chawl*. He visited her every day, swore undying love and finally begged her to leave the *dhanda* and live with him. He would not share her, he said, come and keep house for me. She moved in and gave up her streetwalking. She cooked and cleaned for him, met him at the door every evening and put *sindoor* in her hair with naive avowals of love.

Till the night he came home with six drunk men. For 300 rupees he told them, you can do anything you want with her. He collected their money and left the house. Lata, in her pretty, red sari, her wet hair over her shoulder, froze, horrified. A man made a grab for her. She ran into her room her brain ticking over in panic for possible schemes. Grabbing a knife, she smeared wet *sindoor* over it and onto her stomach. In retrospect, the melodrama makes her laugh; but at the time, throwing open the door and falling into the company with a red trickle leaking from her stomach, was the only thing she could think of doing. The men were very drunk. Rape was one thing, but murder quite another. They left in a hurry.

Lata waited through the night for her treacherous lover. He let himself in at six the next morning. Before he could gather a thought, she had swung herself at him and kicked him in the groin. "You bastard," she screamed, "so this is what you brought me here for? This is what you mean by loving me?" She returned to her communal home and wept. Leave, her guru told her, they'll come looking for you once they find out that you've tricked them. So Lata shifted house and came to stay at Sukhlaji Street, determined never to get involved again. Love was a sordid affair and men were strictly for business.

SUKHLAJI STREET HAS a special smell about it. I get a whiff of it as I go past the footwear shops and the grade-three *biryani* joints that line the main road all the way from Grant Road station. Beyond the shiny, garish green of Taj Talkies and its loud overblown posters, the smell is a tangible thing–surrounding you, getting into your hair and into the folds of your clothing till you feel you must brush it out like grains of sand for it to go. It is the smell of cheap sex.

You could easily miss the turning into Pahela Galli, off Sukhlaji Street, if it wasn't for the royal blue signboard of the municipality offering the street a name that no one uses. But the narrow opening is deceptive and Pahela Galli is suddenly wide and quiet from the wail and rattle of the trucks, taxis and handcarts that choke Sukhlaji Street. A long decrepit building runs to the left of it with peeling green paint that is now an indistinguishable grey. This is the *chawl* where Lata stays.

Hijras and whores line the balconies like pigeons on a rail, watching the activity on the street with desultory eyes. They sit around in little idle groups on the threshold of their rooms doing the hundred odd things that women on their own do. Oiling and plaiting their hair, picking nits, pluck-

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ing eyebrows and talking. Vendors weave their way through the groups on the narrow balconies and call into each room selling *mehndi*, bangles, *gajras*. In the daytime there is an uneasy somnolence about the place.

The street ends about a 100 yards further at a crossroads that has a police *chowki* at its junction. Beyond it lies the worst area in Bombay, infested with local *dadas* and their criminal gangs, petty thieves and pimps, smugglers and their henchmen. Even the police rarely venture in unless they come looking for trouble.

I run up the stairs to Lata's room on the first floor and several women sitting idly on the balcony catch my hand and direct me to the second floor. "Up, up," they say, "You go up." The second floor is a pot joint and they are sure that anyone in faded jeans and a kurta must belong there. I smile at them and continue walking to Lata's room. A goat is tied outside it. Lata comes out to greet me with a wide smile.

"I thought you wouldn't come," she says, with the strange lisp that I am now growing used to. It is the result of trying to convert a male voice into one of female sensuality and the drawn-out syllables have an exaggerated coyness.

"Of course," I say, "why shouldn't I come? I am your friend, aren't I?"

"We don't have many friends," she says simply. "His mother died," she points at the goat, "So we are feeding him with a bottle."

The inside is painted a bright blue, that is really quite pleasing. A giant fourposter occupies almost three quarters of the room. Two people are sleeping on it. One under it. The only other furniture is a bright blue wooden bench and someone is sleeping on that too. Somebody else sleeps on the ground between the bed and the bench. Lata shoos everybody awake and makes room for me on the bench. There are two girls and three *hijras* and all of them sit up rubbing their eyes and grin, unabashed at being caught sleeping at ten in the morning. Mithu the parrot gurgles in his cage in a corner and a girl gives him a smacking kiss through the bars.

The walls are covered with pictures and oddments. Pictures of Bechraji Mata, the *hijras'* patron saint, extracts from the Koran and over the door two orange sacks, garlanded and annointed with *haldi* and *kumkum*, that look suspiciously like male organs. I'm told that they are the 'Supreme God'. A covered *dholak*, the *hijras'* traditional instrument for making money, hangs in a corner, dusty with disuse.

Lata (sitting) with friends: living together in harmony.

The room is neat. Even the clutter of seven people living together has a certain order about it. The mountainous lump on the bed resolves itself into the *amma* of the house, the guru, the madam, the provider. She is all of these things and a *hijra* too. Everything about her is well-kept: her finger nails glow with health and her fat, pudgy feet have no cracks in the heels. She is the only one among them all who wears gold in her ears, her nose and on her arms. Her voice is a deep rumble in her stomach when she greets me. *Hijras* I have discovered have their own language and although everybody in this *chawl* speaks a civilised Tamil or Kannada, they sometimes converse in their own heathen tongue to members of their sect who come from different parts of the country. As a special concession, Lata has taught me the words for 'man' and 'woman'. Now *amma* quizzes her quickly on who I am. Lata explains and introduces her to me. "This is our *amma*. She owns all of us."

"All?" I question, "Even the girls?"

"Of course," is the answer. They tell me a story.

Once upon a time the whores were frightened of the *hijras*. They were better with the clients and stole their custom. Besides girls were dangerous, they carried diseases. Men came back and asked for the *hijras*. "*Arre* you stay one night with us, *babu*, and you'll

Hijras and whores line the balcony of the chawl like pigeons on a rail.

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The whores were jealous and the hijras were forced to find a street of their own.

never go back to a girl again," they boasted. The *hijras* had a neat little racket going. On Falkland Road it was open war. The whores and their pimps wouldn't let them stand at their street corners and peddle. So the *hijras* found a street of their own and cooed and clucked over their men while the whores still went through the motions with bored indifference and said, "Twenty more for stripping and charges apply for one time." The girls lost more custom.

In the end they swallowed their pride and in the joint interests of business, let the *hijras* into their houses. The madams bought *hijras* and girls and gave the customers a selection. The arrangement worked very well. Pahela Galli hosted a combined dormitory, with *hijras* in a majority. On Falkland Road they limited themselves to a large shaky house on Cross Lane 5 that didn't allow any *chokris* and through the dark corridors of which the *hijras* roamed freely, clad only in stuffed bras and petticoats, making playful passes at the giggling tea boys who brought up their refreshments.

I FIRST MET Lata with Pramod Navalkar, a Shiv Sena stalwart and Member of the Legislative Council (MLC), with an uncanny knowledge of the underworld. He knew Pahela Galli like an old shoe and took me one night at one am for a quick reconnaissance. We found Lata and her friend Jayanti outside the *chawl*, eyeing us with a friendly curiosity, as we stopped the car in front of them. *"Arre, chokri hai!"* they exclaimed and giggled into their hands. Navalkar asked them if they would come for a drive with us. "She wants to be your friend," he explained. They looked wary immediately. A man, already with a girl—hardly regular custom. Fears of being duped into a tough spot, of rape or a mugging raced through Lata's mind. A hurried consultation and they reckoned we looked innocent enough. "Come," they said, "We'll go." Minds made up, they were like children out on a treat, smiling and giggling happily. Lata explained their initial reluctance, "*Kya* aunty, here the people are very bad. We must be very careful. They take us to lonely spots and then they can do anything. Steal all our money—*anything*. We generally do not go outside our area."

Lata was a surprise. If it hadn't been for Navalkar's keen eye, I would never have thought her a *hijra* at all. Her face was smooth and hairless and with eyebrows plucked to a fine arch, she was really quite pretty. Her sari hid any masculinity of build and her gestures were entirely feminine. She would use her arms and hands with the effectiveness of an actress. But Navalkar said the swaying walk was a dead giveaway. They all walked like cancan girls at rehearsals. And once they spoke, their masculine tones left no doubt.

Navalkar suggested going to a restaurant to eat. There were squeals from the back seat. "No, no," they both said in chorus, "We feel shy."

Shy? I was astounded. I could hardly reconcile their attitude to the image of the brash, brazen *hijras* I had seen begging and singing at weddings. Why were they shy? I asked.

"It is like this, aunty," Lata replied. "See, you people have some standing. Now if we go with you to some place where there are other people, they will whistle and catcall and how will it look? We don't like it." I sat in silence perplexed by the sensitivity I had not credited them with.

I tell them that I am interested in the way they live and why they have become *hijras*. Navalkar, who has himself extensively researched and studied the *hijra* community, told me that all of them were originally men and had come into the community very willingly, contrary to the recent rumours in the press that suggested forced emasculation and induction into the ranks. I check the veracity of this with Lata. From what she tells me, Lata at least, needed no coercion.

LATA GREW UP in a lower middle class neighbourhood in Hyderabad. She was then, a playful and deviant little boy with an inexplicable desire to dress dolls. His parents grew impatient and a trifle worried as he persisted in his strange urges to grow his hair and wear frocks and his father beat him often to get him to behave more like a boy. The bewildered child understood nothing about the beatings and withdrew more into himself as the pressure to conform intensified. When he was nine he finally ran away and found a home with the *hijra* community who understood his desires perfectly and even encouraged them.

He was bought by a guru in Bombay who took him before a council of elders to decide his fate. A slight, fair child with delicate features, the elders decided he would grow up a fine woman if he were emasculated immediately. The *jalsa* was organised with a great deal of fanfare and a *davat* for

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the entire community was arranged. He was dressed as a bride and fussed around like a new born foal and Lata, still shaky from the operation performed a week before by an experienced old hand, was delighted. She grew up into a good investment, good looking and smooth skinned, an asset she remains inordinately proud of. She would make a customer run his hands over her almost hairless arms and smooth cheeks and say, "See? No bristles. Show me even one hair and *main aap ke naam pe sava rupia chada ti hun, Babu, haan,"* then giggle at her own vanity.

Jayanti, with her small dark face still besieged by adolescent pimples and her thin, wiry body masculine in look and movement, was not so lucky. She left home, a village outside Bangalore, when she was a grown man of 18 but with a similar predilection for femininity. Her father was disgusted and Jayanti quietly went away to avoid causing him further embarrassment. In Bombay, her guru would not pay for her *jalsa*, so Jayanti has to save from her own earnings. She looks upon her rite of emasculation as a *nirvaan* and bears the burden of her masculinity with quiet fortitude till she can be reborn.

NOW IN LATA'S room, I am being overwhelmed with hospitality. A Mangola has appeared like magic and is thrust into my hand. Nobody listens to my no, thank yous. They have assumed I am staying for lunch and someone is quickly dispatched to the kitchen to start preparations. The kitchen is at the far end of a narrow corridor that leads from the main room and has several little wooden cubicals on either side. These are the 'business rooms'. They are inhumanly small.

I am a prize curiosity and several heads prop round the door to check me out, ask me my name and enquire what I am doing there. Sheela comes in with a heralding commotion. "Oh," she says pouting at me and swaying theatrically, "Who are you?" she asks in English. I show my surprise and tell her that I know who she is and I prefer her without her paint. She is pleasantly disconcerted. "Oh, do you think I am pretty?" she asks her reflection in the mirror on the cupboard that *everybody* looks into as they go past.

"Yes," I say with a smile "but what happened to your impressive bustline?" I notice her blouse is almost flat, compared to the nights when she always displays an expanse of cleft and flesh.

"Why," she says affronted. "I still have it." Exhibitionist to the core, in a trice she has undone her blouse and stripped it off. "See," she says showing off two small breasts.

"That's incredible!" I am truly shocked, "were you born with them?"

"Of course," she laughs at my incredulity.

"*Bahut chalu hai*," Lata says with a contemptuous curl of her lips, "Don't believe her. *Kya hai,* injections *se ho jata hai. Woh injection lagwati hai."* Silicon? Here? Sheela flounces out of the room bored with the conversation.

"How?" I ask Lata.

"*Arre,* here any doctor will do it for you."

But doesn't it cost the earth? "No, **no. Only eight rupees for every injection.** You have to undergo a course of a few weeks. And you have to repeat it every year." My mouth is open in shock. "Yes," smiles Lata recognising the sentiment, "I know. And it hurts, too. If you press it, it goes flat and hurts like hell."

I take Lata out to Chowpatty for what I think will be a nice change. There's obviously a mix-up in wavelength because Lata is nervous and afraid. Jayanti refuses to come outright. Why, I ask. "She doesn't have any nice clothes," Lata replies.

"No, seriously," I say, "why won't she come?"

"Because she doesn't have any nice clothes to wear," Lata emphasises with mild irritation. It's a little more than just vanity.

The day is really not Lata's element at all. She is quiet and withdrawn in **the cacophony of the Sunday evening**

Sheela preens for the camera: an overt desire to be feminine.

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crowds on the beach and is convinced that everybody is staring at her. "Relax," I tell her, "No one is looking. And anyway you've been here before."

"But that's after nine at night. Then there are no families here, only men. Then it's nice." She looks a little more animated, "We come with all our friends in a group, and we don't bother with saris and all that. Just wear any old thing. It is fun."

We sit quietly on the edge of the water watching the hungry breakers gobble up bits of sand and Lata pleats and unpleats her brown nylon sari with agitated fingers. The *pallav* is pulled protectively around her shoulders and the face she took such trouble over before coming out, is pensive.

"Are you happy?" I ask her suddenly.

"Yes," she says.

"But for how long do you think you can continue like this? What will happen when you are old and ugly?"

"It is like this, aunty," she says, "Now I am young and I can earn I give all my earnings to my guru. She will keep enough for all of us to live and give the remaining to the old *hijras*

One of the painted faces and contrived bustlines on Pahela Galli.

who live in a big complex at Lakhi Compound. That is a big *chawl*. We own the whole building and all the old people stay there. When I am old the younger ones will support me." Yes, I say, but what a life.

"Why," she retaliates immediately, "The way we live is as precious to us as yours is to you."

I take her back to Sukhlaji Street and Pahela Galli and her animation grows with each familiar turn. I realise just how much on edge she has been and I am sorry. She brushes aside my apologies and tugs at my arm as we reach the *chawl*. "Come up," she says, "Don't go without having something to eat." I protest, she has been too good to me already and I can tell she is impatient to get dressed. Twilight has fallen in a rush and the colourful players are already walking their stage. Sheela with her pancake make-up is out early on the prowl. "So you're still here," she says saucily, as she walks past my taxi. Jayanti waves to Lata and me from the balcony. "Hurry up," she calls out to her, "You have a lot to do." The gramophone starts up its first round of filmi hits. Lata, preoccupied with what she is going to wear tonight, bids me a hurried goodbye. "And be careful," she shouts a last caution as she runs up the stairs, "Don't get out of your taxi, drive straight out. This area is very bad." I smile and nod, but she doesn't see me. Lata is busy. She has her whole day ahead of her. ♦

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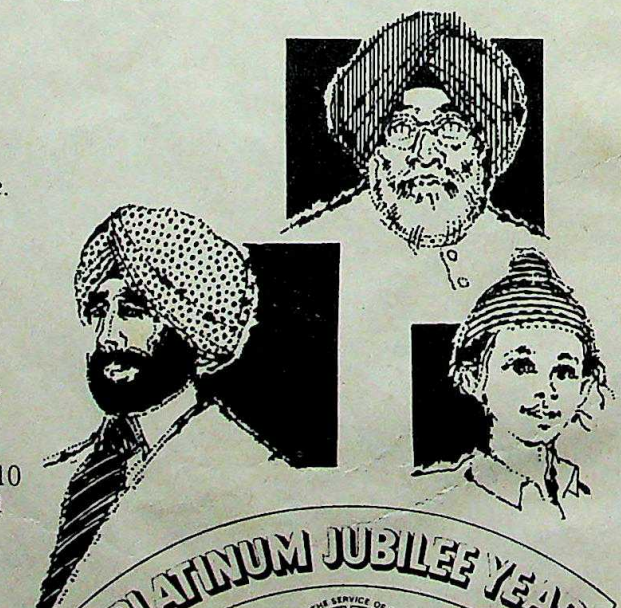

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ROMESH THAPAR: AN INTELLECTUAL BY PROFESSION

By Sushma Singh

After three decades of shifting loyalties, evolving ideology, changing designations and varying occupations, Romesh Thapar has come to be regarded as India's leading intellectual.

IT is there on the foreign news page of the *New York Times*, sticking out of the second paragraph of yet another article on the imminent collapse of Indian democracy, "According to Romesh Thapar. . . ." Across the Atlantic, the name turns up again. On the edit page of the *Guardian*, in a witty feature on India's corruption, "As Romesh Thapar says . . . ." At university seminars, in journals of academic discussion, in the pages of *Time* magazine, on television and in documentary films, Romesh Thapar is omnipresent.

And yet many Indians are known to mutter, "Just who the hell *is* Romesh Thapar? And why is *his* opinion so important?"

People in Delhi or Bombay, of course, know better. There have been rumours and talk for at least two decades: Head Cook in Mrs Gandhi's Kitchen Cabinet, presiding deity at intellectual soirees, overlord of the Indian Tourism Development Corporation's (ITDC) chain of hotels, sonorous voice in Films Division documentaries, reigning doyen of intellectual columnists, Prophet of the Uncommitted Left, Delphaic Oracle to the foreign correspondents—Thapar has been all of these things and has yet eluded being any one. He has been so many things at the same time that the persona has blurred at the edges and people have given up trying to classify him.

Yet, if any one description fits, then he is probably the only true example in India of that almost defunct tradition: the professional intellectual.

"His metier was really being a lecturer or a professor. He should have been in some Ivy League university with people like Galbraith and Kissinger," says Bobby Kooka, a long time

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ROMESH THAPAR

friend.

And indeed, Romesh Thapar would have flourished in the rarefied atmosphere of think-tanks and brains trusts, where finding suitable solutions to impossible problems is a dignified and lucrative way of making a living. Enlightened countries encourage such institutions. In India, however, Thapar and his ilk are ignored and sometimes ridiculed. Many give up, but Thapar has persisted and built himself a following, and in the process, made himself India's presiding intellectual.

For 17 years, he has written a column in the *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)*, that is required reading for much of the intelligentsia. And *Seminar*, the magazine he started 24 years ago, retains its influence with opinion makers and academicians.

Thapar has packed more into his 61 years than people have in several lifetimes. Born into a successful family that flourished as the first rank of white-collar nobility where, as Thapar recalls, "everybody was in the service", Romesh had a favoured upbringing. His father, a doctor in the British Indian army, sent his son to the best schools—first to the Bishop Cotton's School and then the prestigious Aitchison Chief's College at Lahore.

Of the two, the Aitchison College did Thapar much good. In 1938, when he enrolled, the Principal, Sir Harold Barry, was trying to liberalise the school from the princes' college it had been. He took Thapar under his wing and the boy blossomed. He became an outstanding scholar, and an excellent debator. But even then, he showed traces of rebelliousness. Despite winning the Chirag Deen Trophy for debating, it was denied to him because his acceptance speech contained derogatory references to Lady Willingdon, the Vicereine.

Although his father had planned, for Romesh, a career in the Army, Barry persuaded him that the boy should go to University. The father eventually gave in and Thapar was sent to Government College, Lahore, where he won most of the debating trophies awarded in the North. He was all set to go on to Cambridge to study Law, but the War intervened.

Destined to remain in India, Thapar turned to journalism. He wrote to the *Times of India* in Bombay asking them if they could use a trainee. His essay for the Oxford University Press' competition on *Blockade in Modern Warfare* had just been awarded the first prize, and he received a letter from Sir Francis Low, then the Editor of the *Times of India*, enquiring if he was the same Thapar. If he was, would he be interested in coming down to Bombay to join the *Times*?

IN June 1942, Romesh Thapar left Lahore and all its comfortable familiarity to go to the alien world of Bombay. Low started Thapar off as a trainee and within a few months promoted him to Assistant Editor at the princely salary of Rs 450 a month. Thapar was a fast learner and was soon at home in the *Times*. His best friend was Frank Moraes, the only other Indian Assistant Editor on the paper. It was really through Moraes that Thapar found the one ideology that was going to last him half a lifetime. Moraes introduced him to a group of active Bombay Communists which included PC Joshi, Mohan Kumaramangalam, and many others. Till then Thapar had nursed vague ideas of returning to the Punjab and joining an underground movement there. But in Bombay, and in contact with the bright stars of India's communism, Thapar became aware of the evils of Fascism. The war intensified the feeling and he abandoned any ideas of returning to the Punjab. Bombay was the place for him. He began to speak at the Bombay Brains Trust meetings on the need for socialist reform and participated with enthusiasm in the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA).

Thapar was a prominent member of the leftist IPTA which was set up in 1941. Recalls Dina Pathak, now a prominent stage and cinema personality, "It was a spontaneous movement. The best talent in the country was there at the time. People like Sardar Jafri, Mulk Raj Anand and Chetan Anand. And of course, Romesh Thapar. Everything was geared towards the goal of Independence. For the sake of the need of the hour we could be moulded in any direction." Pathak was herself a singer first, then turned to dancing and finally theatre and even film, as the occasion demanded.

Thapar was adept at such versatility. He was not only a forceful speaker at the Bombay Brains Trust with other members like Minoo Masani, Dr DJ Jussawala and Moraes, but was a vigorous editorial writer for the *Times*. He also did talk shows on All India Radio called *News and Views Behind The*

***The cast of Thapar's production:* They Came To A City**

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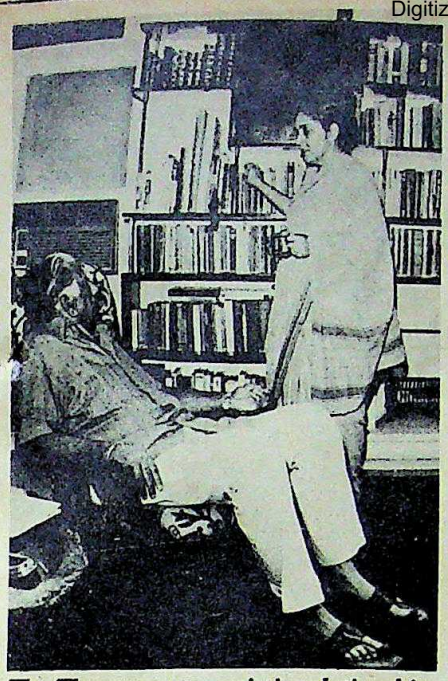


The Thapars: a synergistic relationship.

News, and launched into reading and writing commentary for the Films Division *Weekly News Review*.

In 1945, Thapar married Raj Malhotra the daughter of PC Malhotra, a senior officer in the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal. The families had known each other for years and after the disappointments of Romesh's choice of career and circle of acquaintances, his family was reassured that he had married a sensible girl with an unimpeachable background. Now greying, but still very engaging, Raj Thapar laughs, "It irked him that he had done the conventional thing and married me."

There exists an unseen synergism between the two that develops not only with years of living together, but of living together in perfect accord. Romesh will start a thought that Raj will complete without the least hesitation, and often they will say things in unison. But as Romesh is the first to admit, "There is a basic difference in our make-up. I have always been very idealistic and I get carried away very easily, while she is down-to-earth and very pragmatic." Their differences have been complementary, and whenever Romesh has been lost in a fit of depression or euphoria, Raj has been around to get him back on his feet.

The Thapar flat at Mafatlal Park soon became the favourite haunt of the cultural set, and the local intelligentsia. "It was literally an Open House," recalls Raj, "All sorts of people walked in and out all day. Sometimes we would leave the house, return a few hours later and people would still be coming in or going out."

In 1946 Thapar hit a bad patch. Francis Low retired as Editor and was succeeded by Ivor Jehu. A definite animosity grew up between Thapar and his new editor. Jehu wanted him to .write editorials hostile to all his openly professed socialist ideals. The management of the paper was also changing hands, with the Dalmias taking over the Bennett Coleman & Co. Ltd. from the departing British. Disgusted, Thapar decided to quit and leave the country on a long holiday. He had vague plans of freelancing in London, but no clear idea of what exactly Raj and he were to do for a living. On the eve of his departure, an offer from an unexpected quarter solved his problem.

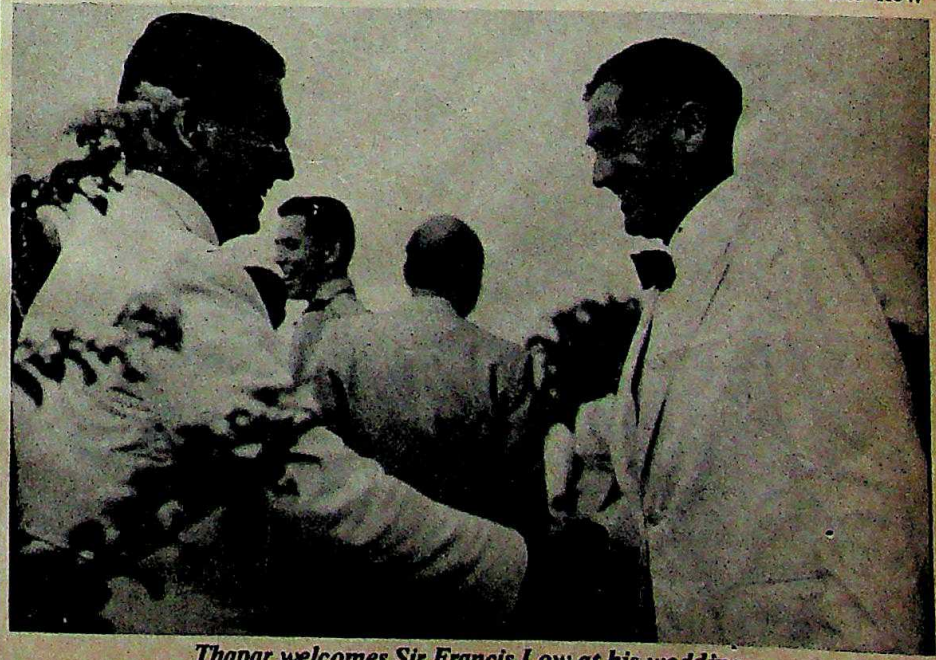
S Sadanand of the *Free Press Journal* wished to establish the Free Press of India News Agency. He called Thapar and asked him to set up the Europe bureau of the agency. He offered to pay them £30 a week for as long as it took them. Thapar was delighted, he now had a mission too, in going to Europe.

"I met the Thapars in London in 1947," recalls Russy Karanjia, then a war correspondent for the *New Statesman*, "I was told that he was the doyen of London-based Indian journalists like Rafiq Zakaria and others." Thapar had built up his little court in London too. "He loves to hold court," says Karanjia, "And I must admit, he does it with grace."

The Thapars spent a year travelling all over Europe building up contacts and setting up Sadanand's news agency. The Free Press of India News Agency, however, did not get off the ground. Sadanand fell out with. Vallabhbhai Patel and was refused teleprinter lines.

THE Thapars returned to a partitioned and independent India, and soon went back to their social whirl and hectic activities. In 1949, with the financial help of a few friends, Romesh started his own weekly magazine from Bombay called *Crossroads*. It was to be a general interest weekly covering a variety of topics. Around the same time, the Communist Party of India was banned and many of Thapar's old friends like Mohan Kumaramangalam and Romesh Chandra approached him for assistance. The Communists needed a publishing medium. Would Thapar be willing to publish occasional pieces that supported their viewpoint? Thapar agreed willingly. *Crossroads* carried several daring articles critical of the government in the state and at the centre, and started a running feud with Morarji Desai, then the Chief Minister, who was wary of their activities. They were also embroiled in litigation with the Madras government that eventually reached the Supreme Court.

Thapar had turned to communism at a time when it was fashionable to be radical and left. But after Independence, the scene changed dramatically. The Communist Party of India was beginning to become more extreme because of the views of men like BT Ranadive who believed in the violent overthrow of the government. Thapar found himself at odds with the new



Thapar welcomes Sir Francis Low at his wedding.

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ROMESH THAPAR

Communists..He believed in their goal, but no longer in the means with which they hoped to achieve it. It was the Communists' attitude to Nehru that widened the rift between Thapar and them. With his prosperous background and western orientation, Thapar had always admired Nehru's style and charisma. As he himself admits, "When you come from the upper middle class you have this weakness for civilized people." The Communists on the other hand, attacked Nehru regularly in *Crossroads*, and accused Thapar of being an armchair leftist. " 'Oh, he's a general's son,' they said, 'what does he know about communism?' " recalls Thapar.

He tried hard to conform to their idea of what a Communist should be. He rendezvoused clandestinely, went underground, played an active part in the outlawed network of the Communists, and yet the rift continued to grow. In 1954, he decided he had had enough. The paper was being used as the central organ of the Communist Party. He could not even begin to restore its image, so synonymous had it become with the Communists. Although he was never a party card holder, he was forever marked as suspect. For instance, BV Keskar, the ultra-conservative Minister for Information and Broadcasting, had him blacklisted from Films Division. Tired and shaken by the confrontation over Nehru, Thapar quit *Crossroads* and handed it over to the Party. For two years he sat at home doing nothing, trying to regain some sort of an identity. "It was definitely a bad time. Morarji hounded him out of every job, he was really knocked flat," recalls Raj, who managed to hold them together through the troubled period.

Thapar ended up doing odd jobs in films and even played second lead to Dilip Kumar in a film called *Footpath*. This only depressed his father; and in any case, he decided that regular film work was not for him. In desperation, he elected once again to leave the country. He left Bombay and went to Delhi to say goodbye to his parents.

He was sitting, one evening, at Connaught Circus and having coffee with Sardar Jafri, the Urdu poet, when MD Bhavnani, Chief Producer of Films Division, came over to talk. He suggested to Thapar that he write to Nehru and get the ban lifted. Thapar did not know Nehru at all, but egged on by the others, wrote a letter anyway. The effect was dramatic. MO Mathai, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister, was on the phone the very next morning, apologising profusely and assuring him that Keskar would call the same day to lift the ban on his voice. This is exactly what did happen.

WITH the professional ban lifted, Thapar returned to writing scripts and reading commentary for Films Division. He was asked by the United Nations to do a film script for a project in Afghanistan and attended a seminar in this connection. "The seminar was on community development and was a very interesting experience. It made me feel that a magazine that dealt with one issue from all angles, like a symposium, would be a good idea." In 1959, the Thapars launched *Seminar* from Bombay. It was an intellectual monthly that was more like a reference document than popular reading. And in a year's time, it made the logical shift to Delhi, to be closer to its high profile readership and to the source of national policy.

The years between 1960 and 1966 were the real coming-of-age of the intellectualism of Romesh Thapar. "Everybody who was anybody used to be at his home in Delhi," recalls a friend, "Inder Gujral, Clobis Macsud, Gopal Radhakrishnan, Karan Singh. . ." He had so established himself that in 1965, he was called into an advisory committee chaired by Mrs Indira Gandhi, to organise the New York Trade Fair. "Mrs Gandhi was playing the Pupul Jayakar role. The arrangements were elaborate. I was asked to give ideas and advice—even on the designing of spoons and crockery for the restaurant!" It was the first of many such advisory committees.

Thapar went on to receive international recognition at the UNESCO International Round Table on Nehru in 1966, where he sponsored a project on a 'Design for Living'. By the time Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister he had risen from being a professional intellectual to being a close advisor. He was asked for advice on projects as diverse as a rural wall newspaper to the organisation of the ITDC. He was the first Chairman of the National Book Development Board and was, for six years, the Honorary Director of the India International Centre (IIC). He left his distinct imprint on the latter, remaking it into a sort of inner sanctum for the intellectual. He organised the discussions, seminars and talks by visiting intellectuals, that have now come to be regarded as the trademark of the IIC. Along with other close advisors like Dinesh Singh, Inder Gujral, Asoka Mehta and Nandini Satpathi, Thapar became famous as part of the 'Kitchen Cabinet'.

In 1969, the year of the Great Congress Split, the Kitchen Cabinet helped the rift along. "We are the generation that grew up under the shadow of Nehru. We thought that Indira Gandhi was the person who would carry through the ideas of Nehru. We felt that we were clearing the way for action. Actually, we were clearing the way for Indira Gandhi," Thapar says with bitter hindsight. The Congress split established Indira Gandhi as a political personality in her own right, not simply as her father's daughter.

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Thapar's* Crossroads *team.

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"Now when some of us meet and talk about old times," shrugs Thapar, "We all say, '1969 was a bad year.' "

Indira Gandhi was already showing signs of outgrowing her Kitchen Cabinet. She no longer consulted them on projects and became adept at listening patiently to everything they had to say, and then doing nothing about it. There were new stars in the ascendant and Thapar and his colleagues were rapidly being given the cold shoulder. Thapar's constant memos to her and his very definite notions on how things should be done, also helped in alienating her further. His slightly pontifical attitude, people feel, got on her nerves and Indira Gandhi decided she did not need him any more. In 1972, the break became final. Indira Gandhi was on the crest of a tumultuous wave. She was the Empress of India. She had humbled the Pakistanis and helped create a new country. "It was then that she could have done anything that she wished. Instead she was more interested in Sanjay and Maruti," says Thapar. His disenchantment was reflected in *Seminar* and his *EPW* column which was also critical of Maruti and other Sanjay toys. Thapar resigned his directorship of the Central Bank in protest, when the Chairman was fired for refusing to sanction a loan to Maruti.

On June 26, 1975, Romesh and Raj Thapar sat in the office of *Seminar* on the first floor of one of the blocks that make up the inner Connaught Circus. The streets were deserted and traffic had been cleared. "Suddenly a convoy of Army trucks rounded the corner. Soldiers with guns and shields jumped out and took up positions around the street. It was like something out of Europe in the 1940s! I said to Romesh, 'This is the beginning.' " Raj remembers fearing the start of something akin to Fascism. The Thapars denounced the tyranny of the Emergency at private parties and social gatherings, through the pages of *Seminar* and in any paper that was willing to print their views. The foreign pressmen, harassed and on the verge of being expelled, turned even more to the voices of dissent, like Thapar. But local people moved away from them, unwilling to be party to such political heresy. *Seminar* was served with its censorship order. Thapar refused to accept censorship and thought it was better to close down the magazine and his *EPW* column rather than toe the government

The intellectual at work: Thapar at his Seminar *office.*

SK 'Bobby' Kooka On Romesh Thapar

A BIG MAN with a booming voice. When you telephoned him you heard "Thapar" at the other end in tones an operatic bass would have been proud of.

Thapar was the *guru* of all the documentary commentators who followed in his wake.

He was frustrated working for the Old Lady of Bori Bunder, because this newspaper has sat on the fence so long, the iron has entered its logical destination. Romesh then started his own paper—*Crossroads*. But it ended in a blind alley. He did not have Karanjia's gut sense for what sells.

The *Indian Express* might have been a vehicle close to his heart but Frank Moraes had switched from the *Times of India* to Mr Goenka so that was that.

Romesh then migrated to Delhi where he was one of the intellectuals Mrs Indira Gandhi liked to listen to when she was Information and Broadcasting Minister. A time when she smiled at you and with you, without you having to be a Head of State!

Romesh loved good food, good drink and his creature comforts, so it was natural that his political thinking should have been left-of-centre.

In another incarnation he could have been a very popular lecturer in a country with educational standards far superior to ours.

When Mrs Gandhi, as PM, made Romesh the first Chairman of ITDC, against my advice as a member of the board, he soon relinquished the chair and made his Number Two take over. This, of course, proved to be a total disaster which Dr Karan Singh, the Minister of Civil Aviation and Tourism, did not have the antennae to foresee.

During the Emergency, Thapar, a champion of free editorial utterance, was disillusioned with Mrs Gandhi and had to close down the periodical he had started—*Seminar*. My guess is that one of his regrets is that as a freedom-fighting journalist he did not permit himself to be jailed during the Emergency. That would have been his *cicatrice de l'honneur!*

My second guess is that Romesh would have given his back teeth to have been an Arun Shourie, but India has produced only one of this endangered species!

Had Romesh been reconciled to genuflecting and the touching of feet he would have made the grade of minister. His girth was not the only deterrent to such honours—to cringe and to fawn being advisable ingredients in our democracy. Romesh Thapar has not achieved what was expected of him; his fine mind, his convictions and his power of speech have not produced the end product he himself was in search of. More's the pity. ♦

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ROMESH THAPAR

line. They posted cyclostyled circulars to all their subscribers saying that because of censorship, they were being forced to close down; this, at a time when no publication was allowed to admit that such a thing as censorship existed! But Thapar had too many powerful connections to be openly persecuted. "I had been too close to her, and people were not sure of what my position was. So they just left me alone."

Without his paper and without his column in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, without the patronage of the Empress, and without his court, Romesh Thapar should have faded into obscurity. Instead he came back from a temporary relegation with renewed vigour and charged with the same sense of creating a new destiny as in the days of his youth, when Independence was to be won. With the coming of the Janata and the new boldness of the press, Romesh Thapar was reinstated as an intellectual pundit. *Seminar* resumed publication and Thapar was offered a platform in *India Today*, a magazine that was emerging as a new force in the free press of the land. As SP Godrej, Chairman of Godrej & Boyce and an admirer of Thapar says, "If he didn't have a place in society and the scheme of things, people would not ask for his opinions. Nobody has ever thought of him as redundant. He has made contributions."

THE story of Romesh Thapar is really the story of India's upper middle class intelligentsia. He is the true Midnight's Child, with his fortune irrevocably linked with the fortune of the educated elite of the country, and blessed with the special powers of perception. His changing ideology—from militant to Fabian Socialist to Communist to Indira Gandhi's brand of Capitalist to, finally, Gandhian Socialist — has followed closely the pattern of the thinking of the Indian intelligentsia, and his disillusionment with the cult of charisma has been theirs as well. After the Emergency, Thapar turned to Gandhi. He admitted to himself that Nehru had been a Romantic and Gandhi had all the real answers. He read everything that Gandhi had written and carried excerpts in *Seminar*. "It is amazing that I did not see it before. Any problem and Gandhi has a solution to it," he says, reflecting once again the current ideology popular with the liberal thinkers.

Today Thapar has been reduced to being little more than an armchair dissident with no means of bringing about any real changes in society. This is the fate of the Indian intellectuals as a whole.

Sometimes the frustration this generates breaks through the cultivated veneer of 'Oh, I never wanted any more'. He now admits to the helplessness of not being able to do anything, to change anything. "I am terribly embarrassed about the fact that I cannot do anything in political terms. To be a politician you have to have a power base, a constituency. I have none. And I cannot mobilise people. I just do not have the right chemicals to work with people. I believe that everybody should find his own level and what he is good at. I am basically a communicator and in the course of a tempestuous life I have learned a lot of practical things, so that in a sense you can say that I am an organiser, an administrator."

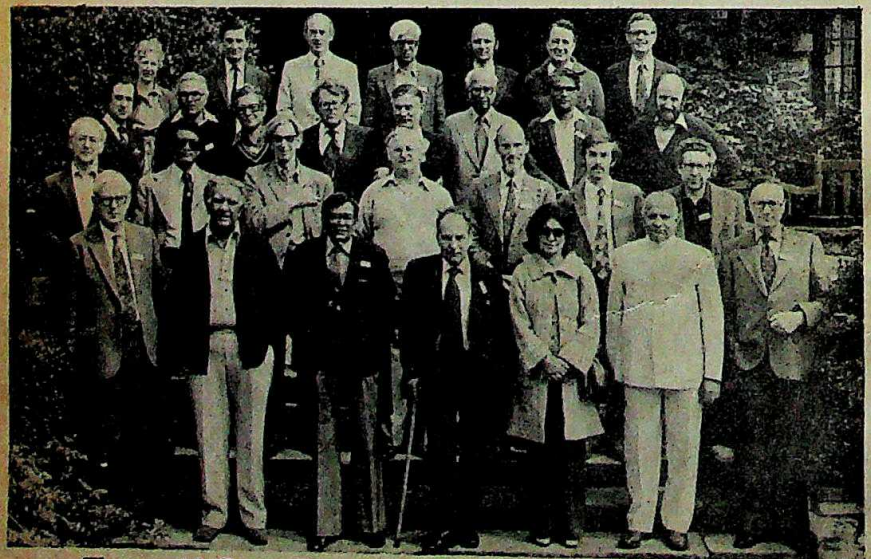
More than that, Thapar is an institution. Out of the wreckage of every ideology and situation he has been able to not only survive, but maintain a stature as well.

Ironically, it is his children who are now living out many of the things he only dreamed of. His daughter Malvika Singh is editor of a cultural magazine called *The India Magazine* and was very actively involved in the theatre. His son, Valmik, is a documentary filmmaker and an authority on Indian wildlife. "We sometimes joke about it," says Thapar with a wry laugh, "but our children are doing all the things that we *wanted* to do."

In a sense, Romesh Thapar has been a disappointment. With his potential, one would have expected him to do a lot more. Although he has an impressive record of titles and offices, that attest to his prominence as an intellectual (such as the Vice Presidentship of the World Future Studies Federation, and a decade-long membership of the Club of Rome), they are little more than designations. The achievement in real terms is lacking. As the Thapars admit themselves, if they were to live their lives over again, they would have to make an important decision, "Either go into politics—we have always stayed on the fringes and that is bad—or specialise very definitely in something, academically. We wasted too much energy in doing so many little things."

In truth, he has no desire to be a politician at all. He is happy being an advisor. "The world is in such a mess, there should be people who suggest ways to improve it. I would like to be the one to give such ideas, and ultimately," he laughs at himself, "have the power to implement these ideas. Or influence people who have the power to implement them."

Which suggests, if Romesh Thapar were to live his life again, he'd still make the same mistakes.



Thapar with George Fernandes, Devraj Urs, Peter Shore and others.

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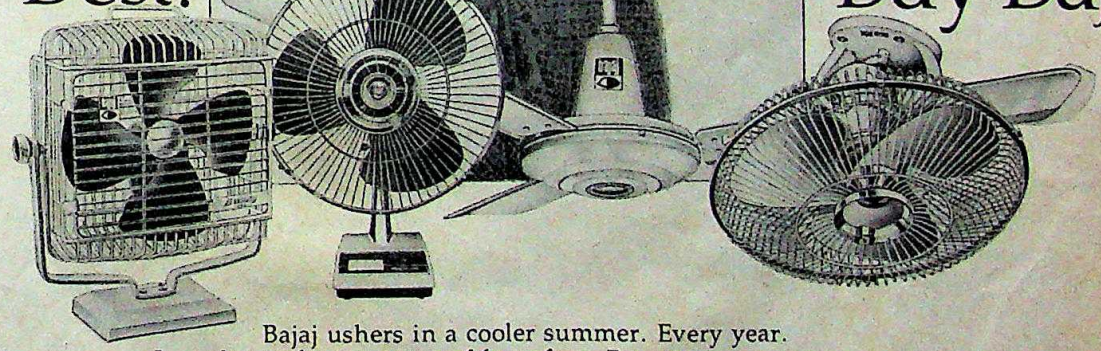

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International Intelligence

A Monthly Look at the Events and Personalities Behind the News

HITLER FORGERIES
Decline Of The Times

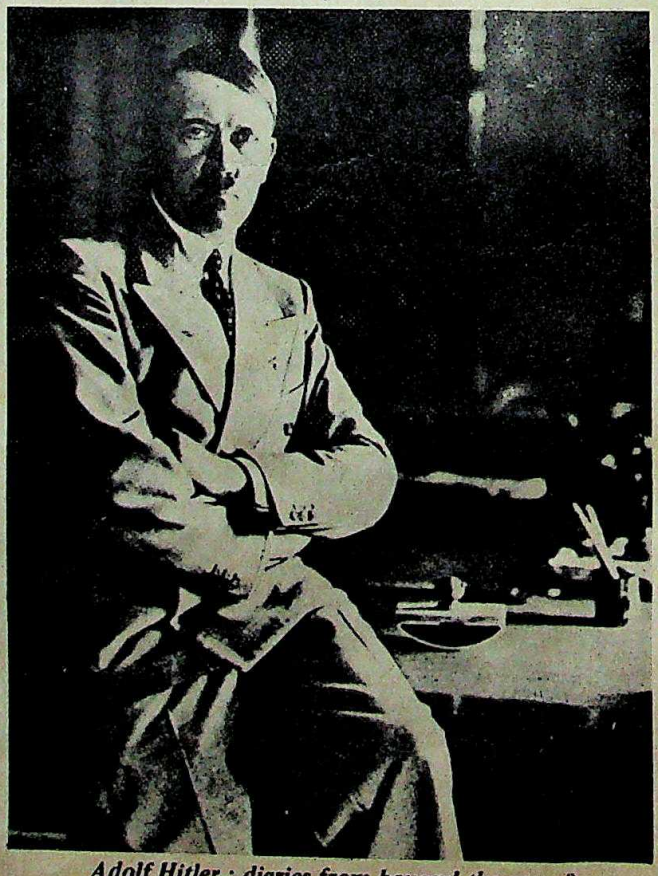
In the first years of every decade, a major journalistic con-trick is perpetrated on an important section of the world's media. In 1971-72, Clifford Irving sold *Life* magazine the rights to his exclusive Howard Hughes biography for several hundred thousand dollars. Just as the magazine was getting ready to go to press, the biography was exposed as a fake—a rewrite of two older Hughes books. Irving, it turned out, had never laid eyes on Hughes despite his claims that the two men had collaborated on the biography.

In 1982-83, an even greater con-trick has been perpetrated on another important section of the media. The so-called diaries of Adolf Hitler, which were to be serialized in the German magazine *Stern* and those pillars of the British establishment: *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, have been shown to have been shoddy fakes. Said an eminent historian who examined them: 'they read as though they were written by Charlie Chaplin'. And scientific tests have proved that they were written on paper that was first produced in the '50s, a decade after Hitler's death. The forger had simply rewritten large chunks of two popular Hitler biographies, to the extent that he had even incorporated the typographical errors of his sources.

DELIBERATE CON

It will be many months before anybody can conclusively establish who was responsible for this con. Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal believes that the diaries were the work of neo-Nazis seeking to refurbish the Führer's image. Others suspect that the East German security services manufactured them as a deliberate disinformation device. It is also possible that they were simply a money-making operation on the part of Gerd Heidemann, the *Stern* reporter who 'discovered' them.

Whatever the source, what seems amazing is that such obvious forgeries should have come so near to publication in reputable journals. In the case of *Stern*, which has always had a sensationalistic streak, the error of judgement is not entirely surprising. But what of *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* the two most respected papers in the English-speaking world? How had such reputable news organizations agreed to print the diaries without checking out their authenticity?



Adolf Hitler : diaries from beyond the grave?

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THE MURDOCH STYLE

Part of the answer lies in *The Times'* change of ownership in 1981. That year, the paper was bought by Rupert Murdoch, an aggressive Australian publisher. Murdoch also owns Britain's *The Sun*, and *The News of the World*, which are best known for their pictures of semi-clad women, and *The New York Post* which has turned into a lurid sensationalistic tabloid. Murdoch has no real political biases but cares only about running profitable papers.

He vowed, when he bought *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, that he would make them profitable. His strategy, it now turns out, was to look for 'scoops' like the Hitler diaries. It was Murdoch himself who opened negotiations with *Stern* for the British rights to the diaries over the heads of his editors. When he was convinced that they were worth the expense, he paid *Stern* £400,000 for them.

Charles Douglas-Home, Editor of *The Times* and Frank Giles, Editor of *The Sunday Times*, were simply informed that their papers would be carrying this 'scoop of the century'. They were not allowed to examine the documents or express any misgivings about the arrangements.

PAID EXPERT

The problem of historical authenticity, however, did remain. So, Murdoch sent

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Private Eye's *view of the fake diaries.*

for Lord Dacre, Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge (formerly Oxford don Hugh Trevor-Roper), who is a director of Times Newspapers and therefore, almost an employee of Murdoch's. Dacre was sent to Germany to examine the diaries.

He declared that he was '100% certain of their authenticity', and in an article for *The Times*, hailed them as an important contribution to history. Dacre had spent very little time examining the documents and other historians were openly suspicious of his conclusion. Lord Bullock, author of the definitive Hitler biography (which, it now transpires, was one of the forger's two major sources of information), expressed surprise at Dacre's hasty authentication and said that as far as anyone knew, Hitler had never kept a diary.

In spite of such doubts, Murdoch instructed his editors that they were to press on. Accordingly, *The Sunday Times* carried a long article pooh-poohing the criticisms of Bullock and other historians. As for scientific proof that the paper the diaries had been written on was as old as it was supposed to be, the paper said that *Stern* had made the necessary tests—which was, in fact, not true.

FRAUD DISCOVERED

Times Newspapers received a jolt when Dacre did a rapid about-turn and said that he was no longer sure that the diaries were genuine. "Oh no, you haven't changed your mind, have you?" *The Sunday Times'* Frank Giles is reported to have told him. But Dacre was adamant. As far as he was concerned, there was no proof that the documents were authentic. According to his colleagues, Murdoch had bamboozled him into providing his endorsement and he had begun to have his doubts almost as soon as he had left the publisher's demanding presence.

At this stage, all *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* had were several documents that most historians were convinced could not be genuine simply because Hitler never kept a diary. The papers had no scientific proof of their authenticity and their own kept historian had withdrawn his endorsement. Most newspapers would have held off then, but not those owned by Murdoch.

He insisted that both papers continue acting as though the diaries were the real thing. Fearful of their credibility in the face of such odds, various members of *The Sunday Times* staff asked editor Frank Giles to address them on the subject of this 'world exclusive'. Giles, who had nothing of his own to add to Murdoch's directives, refused and left for his villa in Corfu on holiday.

As more and more historians began describing the diaries as an obvious fraud, Murdoch began to get nervous. He forced *Stern* to send him two volumes of the diaries and asked forensic scientist Julius Grant to check the paper. Grant, accompanied by *Sunday Times'* special correspondent Phillip Knightley (co-incidently, a former Managing Editor of **Imprint**), carried out several tests before concluding that the diaries were obvious fakes.

Unfortunately for Murdoch, he could not claim even this revelation as a scoop. The West German government had already taken another volume from *Stern* and carried out its own tests. It was soon convinced that the diaries were frauds and announced this before Murdoch could release the conclusions of his British experts.

CREDIBILITY WRECKED

Its 'world exclusive' punctured and its credibility in tatters, *The Sunday Times* carried a grovelling apology to its readers on the front page. Despite its regrets, the paper blamed the entire fiasco on *Stern* who it said, had insisted on the urgency that led Times Newspapers to overlook getting the diaries authenticated. It was an even sorrier spectacle. Not only had *The Sunday Times* ended up with its ego all over its face, but it had also tried to pass the buck and absolve itself of all responsibility.

Fortunately for Murdoch, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher dissolved parliament two days after his 'scoop' fell apart. Both *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* have announced spectacular coverage of the new elections. Obviously they hope that with the election fever, the sad fiasco of the Hitler diaries will be forgotten. ◆

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MADRID LETTER

Marquez Causes A Stir

On April 6 to mark the first anniversary of the Argentine invasion of the Falklands the Spanish daily *El Pais* published an amazing account by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the Colombian novelist who won the Nobel prize for literature last year.

According to him, the Argie conscripts on the islands had been so poorly clothed and sheltered against the bitter cold that 92 of them had to be castrated, their testicles having been badly frostbitten and then had to go back to their trenches. Others were shod only in tennis shoes, which tore off strips of gangrenous flesh when removed after weeks in the cold and wet. Snow glare had blinded 500 Argentine soldiers who lacked protective glasses.

Officers drugged enlisted men before combat, first through chocolate and later by injections, to dull hunger and keep them awake. Many died of cold in their sleep, said Garcia Marquez, luckier than colleagues who died of hunger while trying to get out meat paste that had solidified in its tins. Front-line soldiers were lucky to get sardines covered by ice, while rearguard troops sometimes were given hot food.

Outgunned by British troops with modern rifles and infra-red sights, Argentine conscripts were further traumatised by seeing attackers bowled over by direct hits, then get up and charge again—the Argentines had nothing to compare with the Britishers' bullet-proof jackets.

Garcia Marquez reported all this from unpublished letters circulating among Argentines in their own country and abroad. His article began with an account, as cool as the temper of the whole piece, of an Argentine recruit returning to Buenos Aires after the war and phoning his mother to ask whether he could bring home a colleague who had lost two limbs and been blinded in battle. The horrified woman told her son, no, she couldn't bear to have such a mutilated creature in her house. The son hung up and promptly shot himself, for he was the wounded, blind man.

The piece ended with a reaffirmation of Garcia Marquez's support for the Argentine claim to the Falklands (referred to throughout as the Malvinas), but with the forceful rider that no one should forget the barbarity of those who governed the islands briefly last year, nor the thousands of people who have disappeared in Argentina during the past ten years.

So, how did this bit of Argy-knocking from the top Latin American writer not get a show in the British media?

Well, Garcia Marquez also said in the piece that among the Argentine prisoners released after the war were 50 who had to be treated for anal lesions, caused by rapes perpetrated by Britishers who had captured them in the Darwin area. He also reported that Gurkhas were in the vanguard of the task force's overland push on Port Stanley, "yelling and cutting off heads. . . . one head every seven seconds. They would hold up a head by the hair and cut off the ears." So wrought up were the Gurkhas, the account goes on, that when the battle was over, they continued their killing among the British and were only stopped by being tied up. Of the 700 Gurkhas who disembarked on the Falklands, only 70 survived, Garcia Marquez said.

Clearly over the top there, old boy.

THE GANDHI PROFITS

Who Gets What?

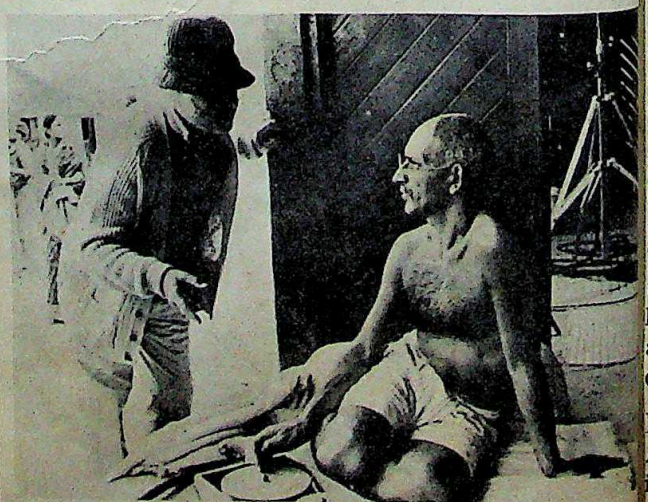
When Sir Richard Attenborough came to India to make *Gandhi*, it now seems clear, he did not have the money required to finish the film. He had verbal assurances from the Government of India that the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) would provide the rupee component of his budget but the precise terms of the deal had not yet been ironed out when he began filming. And his foreign financing was far from secure, with several prospective investors backing out halfway through the negotiations—some during the actual shooting.

All of this seems amazing in retrospect because *Gandhi* has proved to be an extremely profitable film. By some accounts, it is the most profitable British film in history and certainly, it will make far more money than most other films released this year.

MISGIVINGS

Originally Attenborough had been counting on a financial package put together for him by Jake Eberts, chief executive of Goldcrest Films, the British company that made last year's Oscar winner *Chariots of Fire*. As filming went on however the package fell apart. Many institutional investors expressed misgivings about the film's commercial prospects and a family of wealthy expatriate Sindhi businessmen, who had agreed to put several million dollars into the project, backed out.

Finally, Goldcrest was left with only one co-investor: NFDC. Of the film's $22 million budget, the NFDC component was not expected to exceed $6 million or so. Goldcrest had to find $18 million itself if the film had to be made. Eberts went to Pearson Longman, Goldcrest's parent company and secured a guarantee that the



Attenborough and Kingsley : respectable profits.

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money would be forthcoming.

It has proved to be a remarkably good decision. The completed film was sold for worldwide distribution to America's Columbia Pictures for a figure in excess of $23 million, thus ensuring that neither Goldcrest nor NFDC made a loss.

RESPECTABLE PROFIT

Even before the announcement of the Oscar awards, the film had been declared a hit and was expected to gross $60 million in cinema rentals. Allowing for Columbia's share and the cost of the publicity, this left both NFDC and Goldcrest with a respectable profit.

After the eight Oscars however, all estimates have been scaled upwards. For a start, the US and Canadian television rights have been sold to Embassy Communications for $20 million—making the deal one of the biggest in the history of the TV business. Cinema revenues have also shot up. According to current calculations, the film will now take anywhere from $100 million to $180 million at the international box-office. There will also be further revenues from the sale of TV and video rights for the rest of the world.

Of the revenues from cinema rentals, the distributors will take $50-90 million to cover their costs, the costs of the publicity and their profits. With other expenses deducted, Goldcrest, NFDC and Indo-British Films (Attenborough's own company) will be left with a spectacular profit of $40-60 million. The exact ratio in which this sum will be distributed has yet to be worked out and nobody is willing to divulge any details.

BIASED CONTRACTS

According to Indian film industry sources however, the contracts are biased against NFDC. Goldcrest will it seems, take the major share of the profit with Indo-British, which put up none of the capital, getting a hefty chunk. Because NFDC put up 33% of the financing, it appears to have a right to claim 33% of the profits.

Anil Dharkar, the former NFDC executive who helped negotiate the deal, says that misgivings about the profit sharing are misconceived. "NFDC put in Rs 6.5 crores," he explains, "and will get a third of the profits." That figure could now be as high as Rs 20 crores—enough to finance the art film industry in this country for two decades! ♦

TV STORM

Sins Of High Commission

A nasty little row has erupted among London's Indian community. At the centre of the storm is Dr Seyid Muhammad, India's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom. On January 25 Muhammad was interviewed by British TV's Eastern Eye programme, on the Akali agitation. The interviewer was Karan Thapar, a former journalist on the London *Times* and the questions were quite searching. Muhammad found that he could not keep up with Thapar's questioning, fumbled for answers and generally, disgraced himself.

Dr Seyid Muhammad

Staff at India House (as the High Commission is known) were greatly embarrassed by their leader's performance and to make up, put it about that Thapar was a) rude, b) incompetent and c) being paid by the Pakistanis. Claims of Pakistani patronage are no more than laughable as Thapar (a Doon School product) is the son of a former Indian army general and is said to harbour political ambitions himself. Nevertheless, India House arranged for Balwant ('Bali') Kapoor, London correspondent for Delhi's *The National Herald* to libel Eastern Eye in an effort to salvage Muhammad's reputation.

PAY-OFFS

In March, the *Herald* reported that the Pakistanis had paid Eastern Eye £18,000 to carry 'hostile anti-Indian propaganda' and to damage Muhammad's reputation. Like most other news in the *Herald*, the story was ignored in India. Nevertheless, India House sent clippings of it to members of the 'ethnic' press in London and arranged for the allegations to be given wide publicity. Accordingly, a weekly called *Asian Times* frontpaged the story and added that Muhammad had been "hectored and bullied by an interviewer with little ability and even worse manners".

Samir Shah

The row got worse when Eastern Eye's producer Samir Shah called the allegations 'libellous' and British TV executives took offence at the slurs. *Asian Post*, a slick *Newsweek*-style journal for UK Asians, also entered the controversy claiming that the High Commissioner and his Minister (Information) Niranjan Desai had made similar attempts to slander Chottu Karadia, its editor. And by May, the prestigious Sunday newspaper *The Observer*, had got wind of the controversy. It referred to 'wild allegations' about Pakistani payments and concluded 'it's not true'.

Karan Thapar

DESAI BLAMED

Now, the row shows no signs of abating. According to *Asian Post*, India House has resorted to slander and libel since Niranjan Desai 'has been under a cloud because of a badly publicised Festival of India'. It adds, "Desai is in the frontline of the battle to save his skin and that of his boss who is not a career diplomat. He is using the intelligence wing of the diplomatic mission as well as the services of a bunch of carefully cultivated journalistic contacts to discredit newsmen who do not see eye to eye with him."

At this rate, it seems probable that Mrs Gandhi will have to step in and do what she always does in such cases—ask Swraj Paul to settle the matter. ♦

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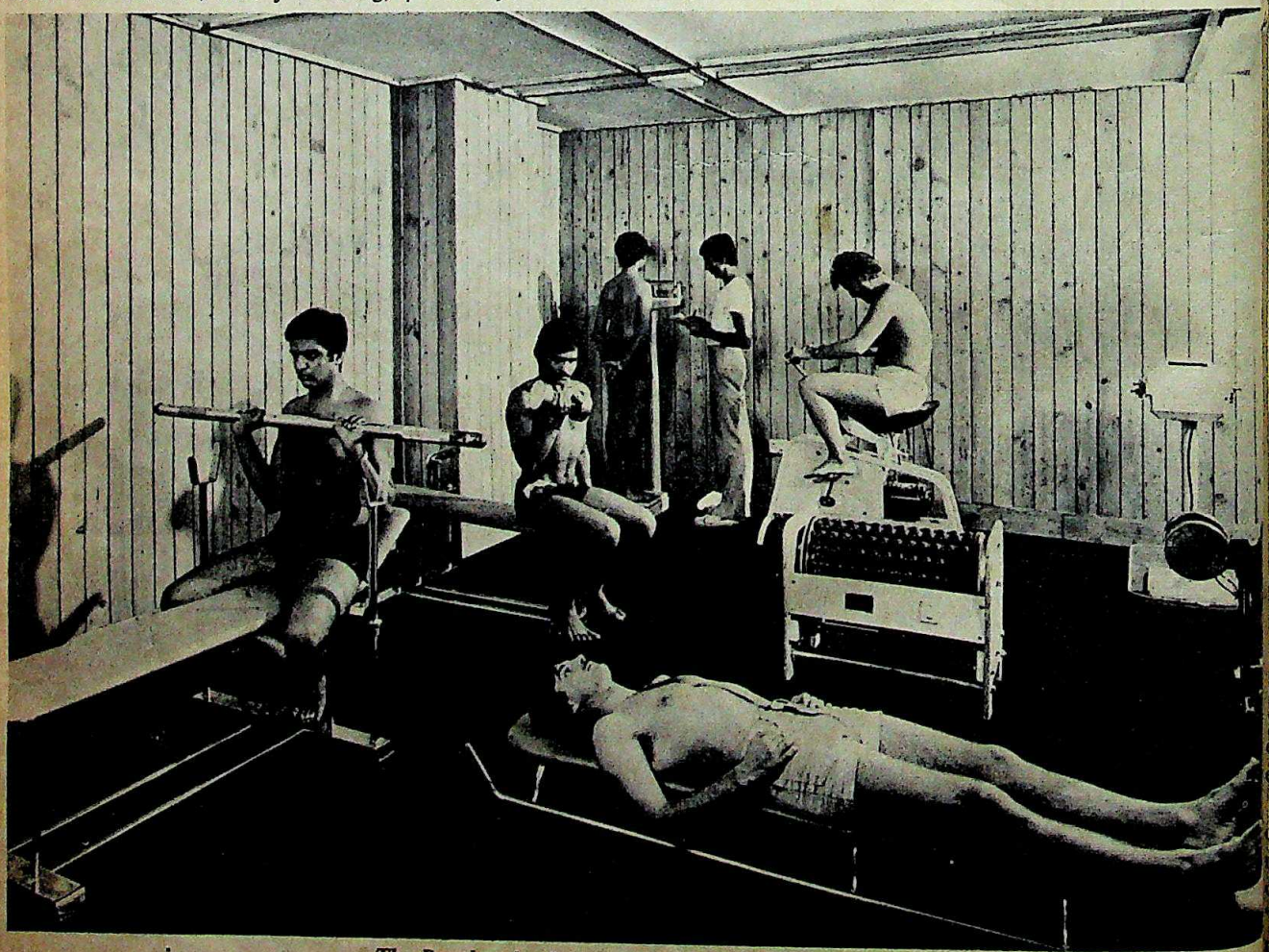
Living

Bombay Gets Physical!

Coincidences, coincidences! Bombay and Los Angeles seem to be tied together by that fine and unbreakable cat-gut of coincidences. Firstly they are both glamour-towns, housing vast and slightly surreal film industries. They're geographically similar: far-flung, bordered by a technicolour sea, and a margin of 70mm beaches; but, what makes them so distinctly similar is their obsessive preoccupation with all things healthy. Both cities have spun themselves into a tizzy over body. The LA preoccupation with the physical is legendary. Golden-hued, impeccably-muscled women and Adonis-like men seem to stalk the streets and haunt the beaches; their jeans snug, their wheat-bran chewing teeth in mint condition, and their armpits free of hair. In LA, it seems, everyone is lean, laid-back and tanned. Leave New York to the muggers and Washington to its Watergates. LA simply has its Golden People with their yoga and yoghurt. Similarly Delhi might boast of its Asiads and Calcutta of its culture-junkies, but for Bombay, the city of stars, socialites, gangsters and glamour-molls, is reserved its health-consciousness.

Suddenly businessmen are joining health clubs by the droves and even harmless housewives are being initiated into the secrets of the whirlpool bath and the treadmill. In a collective leap, Bombayites have realized that it is fashionable to be healthy. And everybody knows, to the Bombayite fashion is a serious business.

Of course, in pockets of the city, there have always been sweaty Arnold Schwarzenegger-like individuals, their muscles balloon-like and bulging, sweating it out under dumbbells. The Talwalkar gyms have been very much a part of Bombay's psyche. But, to become a cult in this premier city of five star culture, things have to begin at the top: in a five star hotel. And so it was that when the Taj opened its Health Club in 1973, with much fanfare and with the likes of Zeenat Aman and Khushwant Singh crediting their bodies beautiful to the wonders of



The Bombay businessman keeping fashionably fit.

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calisthenics and steam-baths, it had on its hands a phenomenon.

In the wood-panelled environs of the sauna room, the ugly Bombayite contemplated his navel and fantasized about getting pretty. Businessmen, their paunches well-supported by *pakoras* and *halwa* were seen to be embracing fierce-looking Health Club apparatuses with desperate frenzy. Salvation, were it to come, was going to do so through the vigours of the motor-operated vibro belt.

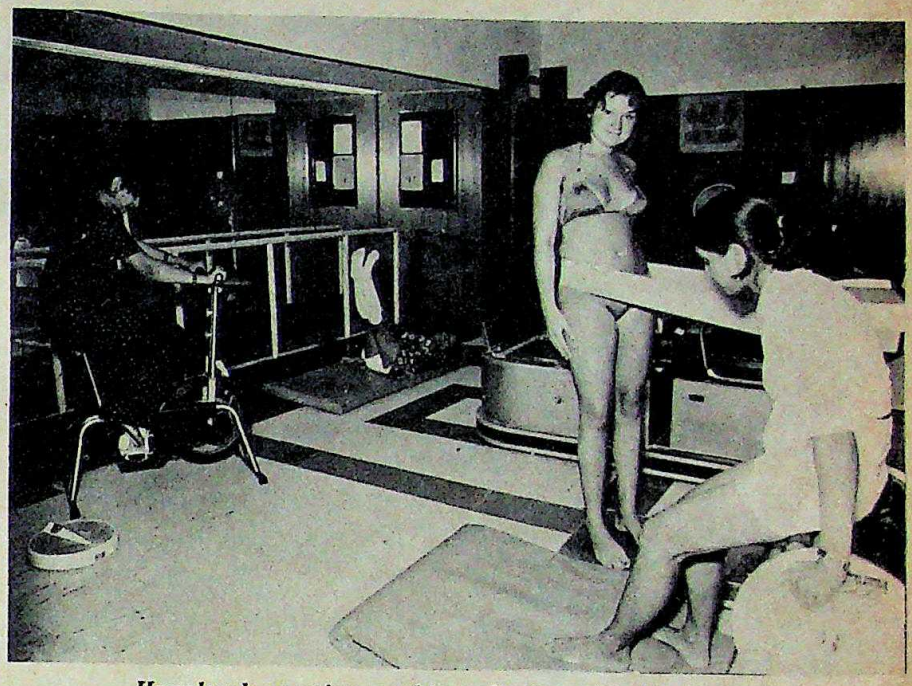
Nobody cottoned onto it as snugly as the admen. Everything that expanded, contracted, minimised or maximised you, was being sold in magazines. Bust-expanders, bull-workers, vibrating belt and diet pills could be bought by the bucketfuls. Just fill in the forms, enclose the cheque and remember to write the correct pin code number, thank you.

Of course, this consciousness was to expand to food and drink. Rama Bans, that invincible high-priestess of health was one of the first to do it. In a comprehensive compendium, she meticulously listed the calorie count of items as incongruous as *jalebis*, *dhoklas* and *shreekhand*. Praveen Babi was on the Beverly Hills Diet, Shashi Kapoor on Dr Atkins, and Rekha just surrendered her luscious body to the dual cares of Dr Snehlata Pande and Ms Bans.

Dalda was the dogma of the day and later, even this was considered passé and cooking oils such as Saffola were promoted. And whereas, the bogeymen of businessmen had previously been income tax and ulcers, today they are cholesterol and flab.

Quietly, assiduously, in another corner of the city, the wily doctor Vishnu Kakkar was mixing powders and potions which promised to pulverize the pounds off pachydermal females. As the fever caught on, everybody who was anybody was on the racecourse. Models, admen, film stars, were seen to be sweating it out on the equestrian grounds, stumbling into equine excretions, at unearthly hours.

Of course, an entire section of the city had to be costumed for its new role. T-shirt manufacturers with such optimistically-charged names as 'Smash' 'Move' and 'Action' mushroomed from Mulund to Matunga.



Harmless housewives: seeking salvation with the vibro belt.

Jeans were sold, with the emphasis on thigh, bottom and crotch. And tracksuits were the order of the day.

Then came the turn of the exercise classes. Dancers Astad Deboo, Kavita Sahni and Farida Peddar seemed to have a monopoly on them. Deboo and Peddar taught an interesting concoction of dance and drill, Rukshana Todiwalla did aerobics in her workshop class and Kavita Sahni stuck to teaching the Jane Fonda course. The name of Jane Fonda, that Queen of contortions who'd spun an entire industry around her leotard-clad body, was being invoked in private homes too. Her book (*Jane Fonda's Work Out Book*) reached the bestseller lists in the city, her cassettes were played incessantly, and the video cassettes of her lessons were as precious on the video circuit as the latest hard porn films. Religiously, between five and six, (the bewitching hour) nubile and not-so-nubile females were seen clad in fluorescent leotards, ankle-warmers, hair smartly held back with headbands, vigorously performing the Fonda rigours.

Then, the next step up the heath-spiral was reached. Diet beers and a diet cola, Do it, were thrust upon an enthusiastic, sweaty city. Marketed as containing only 75 calories, the cola, when last heard of, was doing rather well. Diet beers, seeming paradoxes in themselves, were also being lapped up gratefully.

Rama Bans then defected to the Sea Rock Hotel and got even more ambitious. Venturing forth into a plethora of exercises, she flew down a Japanese masseuse, trained in the ancient secrets of the *shet shu*. There was even talk of converting the entire Sea Rock Hotel into a health farm.

Clearly, matters had reached a head. Mr FP Shroff of the Taj group of hotels, sees the trend catching on. "Bombayites have suddenly got health-conscious," he says. "And as a five star hotel, we have to offer all kinds of amenities for the health conscious."

Deboo, the versatile dancer says, "Yes there is a trend in Bombay, people have suddenly got conscious of their bodies. I don't know how long it's going to last, but certainly the young kids are very serious about it. I guess its because of celebrities like Jane Fonda and the media exposure of health fads. But like most things, it started in the West and, as far as I'm concerned, I've no complaints."

Nor do the other dance exercise teachers, health club owners, diet cola bottlers, bull-worker makers and T-shirt manufacturers, who are jogging all the way to the bank.

Malavika Rajbans Sanghvi

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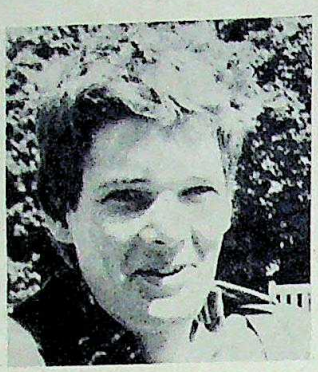
Comment



Traveller's Tale

BY DAVID LLOYD-THOMAS

David Lloyd-Thomas is a British journalist who spent three weeks in India last month. This is his account of the trip.

TAKE YOUR OWN water they warned me when I set out for India. And so I did. It was unnecessary. After four days of drinking bottled fluid, I switched to the indigenous version. So far, there have been no after-effects. But if you should read an obituary in the next month or so. . . .

What they didn't tell me to do was to take my own conversation. I arrived the week after Richard Attenbore won his misbegotten Oscar. Tired of the media hyping of *Gandhi* (I have nightmares about TV interviews in which a fat man keeps intoning, "Mountbatten and Nehru begged me to make this film"), I had hoped to find the real India here. Instead, all anybody would talk about was *Gandhi*.

At a smart Delhi party, thrown by a poovy antique dealer (who added to his image by putting it about that he pimped), I tried unsuccessfully to listen to the many distinguished musicians who were performing. But I was collared by several plumply determined ladies who wanted to know if I had met 'Dickie'. Somewhat warily, I said that yes, I had and no, I wasn't taken in by his portly sincerity or his dreadful film. It was as though I had farted at a funeral or dared to look up the Queen's skirt. Was I aware that the film had won eight Oscars? Did I realise that at this very house, Dickie had rolled an appreciative eyeball at my host's Chinese-eyed merchandise? And how dare I say this to friends of Sir Richard's?

I made my excuses and left. But *Gandhi* was to pursue me. Attempting to put together an article on the Bombay film industry (yes, yet another one), I interviewed an aging star. His much lifted face settled on an expression of bewildered disapproval when I told him what I thought of *Gandhi*. At a media party in Delhi a Sikh writer fixed me with the sort of look Southhall bus conductors reserve for skinheads. Was I mad or just perverse?

The reaction surprised me. How would the Americans react if an Indian used their money to make a mediocre film about George Washington, which portrayed him as a 'cute' old man who always got his own way by refusing to eat dinner before he went to bed! Or us Brits to a film about Winston Churchill that had an Indian actor playing the old boy as though he was a cousin, once removed, of ET—the extra terrestrial?

But Indians, I soon discovered, are a generous people. They even swallowed old Kingsley's line about miraculously rediscovering the Indianness he had carefully concealed during his years with the National Theatre and forgave (I am told) Attenbore's mistreatment of his Indian unit. Us Brits are not so kind. Consider the uproar over *Tatler* editor Tina Brown's censorship of Gita Mehta. Brown is married to Harry Evans who is a director of Goldcrest, the part financiers of *Gandhi*. When Mrs Mehta tore the film to shreds in a review, Brown refused to print it, presumably because of Harry Goldcrest involvement. British journalists were outraged by the affair, but here, Mehta's own countrymen don't seem to mind.

Nevertheless, I am not going to complain about the generosity of Indians. I did very well out of it, thank you. The only Indians I had met in London were the kind I had not wanted to see again. Overweight journalists who wrote about curry and cricket, slimy Cambridge Union types who had turned to 'ethnic' broadcasting because their papers were about to fire them, and podgy antique smugglers who used Arab money to social climb.

I was pleasantly surprised to discover how different Indians were in their own country. A friend had given me a few phone numbers. I called them all, expecting nothing and was overwhelmed with hospitality. In eight days in Bombay, I attended five parties, was asked to lunch six times and managed two assignations.

Indian women, I had been warned, did not take kindly to men who made passes. This, I soon discovered, was not quite the case. At a party by the pool of an established Bombay hotel I counted at least three tentative approaches. One woman wore white and read the news, another was a former Miss World contestant with pouting lips and protruding front teeth and the third was married to an electronics millionaire.

I mention all this, not to offer

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vicarious thrills but to illustrate the extent to which I found my preconceptions out of joint. The final straw was when a busty painter with the sort of mouth that looked great on Bugs Bunny, dragged me to a corner to discuss 'the perfectly normal sex urge', while giving my inside leg a 'perfectly normal' stroke.

Was I dreaming, or was this really India? At the risk of sounding neo-colonial, I must point out that several people connected my sex appeal with my Englishness. Everybody I met seemed to love England (the Sikh writer in Delhi even told me that he wanted the Raj back—his father had been a knight!), all things English were to be admired, be they Attenbore or the horrific flop of the Festival of India.

I remember the Festival well—though nobody else in London seemed to have noticed it. I had been dispatched to interview an elderly Indian woman who was said to be Mrs Gandhi's art adviser and the Queen of Indian Culture. She held court in an expensive London hotel and was accompanied by a simpering poof who could well have been the Queen of Indian Culture himself, for all I know. I had hoped to learn something about Indian art from this pair. Instead, all I got was cringe-making 'social chit-chat' with generous name-dropping and quite naked social climbing. Did I like David Hockney, wasn't The Barbican simply *dreadful* and guess who they'd met yesterday?

I returned to the office profoundly depressed and decided against writing out the interview. In the '50s and the '60s, when Aisha Jaipur and Jackie Baroda (who is now almost completely spherical) represented India in London society, the liberals remained standoffish. Aisha and Jackie were *princes* we were told. Leave the maharajahs to their bubbly and boys. Let the Indian meritocracy emerge. But judging by the charlatans and climbers who dominated the Festival, we were better off with the princes and their Dom Perignon and debauchery.

Incredibly, nobody here shared this perception. I met some lovely people—bright, talented and witty. But at every party, the same conversations were recycled. Praises of *Gandhi*, nostalgia for the Raj, curiosity about the Festival and pointless anecdotes about some man called Paul, who is supposed to live in London.

It is not my place to say this, I know. And a few weeks in India do not a pundit make. But honestly, can't people be a little more perceptive? India is too wonderful a country to be plundered by Oscar-hunting Attenbores and self-seeking cultural ambassadors! At a London party, I once ran into an expatriate Indian tycoon. He was young, quite good looking, immaculately tailored and very bright. He owned a building in the City of London, sold arms to half the world and lived in style in Hampstead. I was quite impressed till, after his fifth Scotch, he began telling me about his Indian interests. It soon became clear that he longed to do nothing more than to rob the country of his origin. To this end, he had enlisted the services of an aggressive if dimunitive minister and together, the pair had netted millions in wheeling and dealing. Why did he do it? Surely, he didn't need the money?

The tycoon put his hand on my shoulder and squeezed it playfully. "You British," he chuckled, "you'll never understand India."

Perhaps not.

♦

I had been dispatched to interview an elderly Indian woman who was said to be Mrs Gandhi's art adviser and the Queen of Indian Culture. She held court at an expensive London hotel and was accompanied by a simpering poof. . . . .

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Bestsellers And The Dirty Business Of Double-Dealing

By Shirin Mehta

IN 1961, WHEN HAROLD ROBBINS' *THE CARPET-BAGGERS* WAS IMPORTED INTO INDIA, IT SOLD 5,000 COPIES. LAST YEAR, THE SAME AUTHOR'S *SPELL-BINDER*, BY ALL ACCOUNTS A MUCH WORSE BOOK, SOLD 18,000 COPIES

within weeks of distribution. Best-sellers have never had it so good in India. Sales figures are shooting up and newspapers and magazines are full of reviews and information about new books. Each year, a new breed of authors with names like Jonathan Black, Michael M Thomas and Jeffrey Archer seems to emerge and their books are snapped up as soon as they hit the stands. The local book import trade has never before had to cope with this huge volume of sales and business is booming.

Or is it? Despite the jump in sales, the trade is more disorganized and panicky than it has ever been before. Increased competition has led to a price crash and spells potential disaster for some importers. Undercutting and dumping are now commonplace and distributors' fortunes change from day to day. Hardcover editions are being sold for a third of their price, American editions are challenging the security of established distributors who have traditionally, distributed British editions. And cheap, pirate editions pose a threat to the importers of the official editions.

The only people who stand to benefit from this chaos are the readers. With the constant undercutting, it has now become possible to shop around for a book, coming up triumphant with the hardcover edition at only Rs 20 or so. Besides the range of books has expanded as more and more importers have brought in a wider selection.

A catch-22 however prevents this boom in sales from working to the benefit of the trade. Sales are increasing because prices are, incredibly, falling. And prices are plummeting because of cut-throat competition in the business today. Booksellers find themselves in a quandary. If two distributors both import the same book, there is going to be no incentive for the shopper to stock them unless he gets an attractive concession. So, if one offers a 20% discount, the other will offer 25%. And there is no guarantee that a week later, an unknown party will not offer an even greater discount. As business increases, so do the risks.

This is a far cry from the workings of the book trade prior to the late '60s. In those days, it was a staid, starchy business: well-organized, always ethical and seldom hazardous. Well-established corporate names like Orient Longman, Macmillan and Allied were all in it together. They co-existed amicably, with rigid, compartmentalized areas of sales that seldom overlapped.

And then came piracy. A dirty, much-abused business, but one that grew in rapid leaps. No longer were the rights of the publisher sacrosanct. Also, the Open General License scheme allowed practically anyone (even individuals) to import books and changed the nature of the trade. It attracted more competition. And sharks.

Conducting business over polite luncheons became passe. Open rifts between publishing houses paved the way for battles between importers. The changes were compounded by an aggressive new breed of entrepreneurs who exploited the overlap in the international publishing market. Traditionally, Indian distributors dealt with British publishers and imported their editions. In fact, authors' contracts in Britain, specifically covered sales in the Indian market. However, each best-seller has a minimum of four editions: a paperback and a hardcover in Britain and a paperback and a hardcover in America. Under the standard authors' contract, the US editions are only meant for distribution in certain overseas markets such as Latin America, while the Commonwealth market is reserved for the British. Unfortunately, distinctions are difficult to enforce.

The new breed of importers took to bringing in the US editions and began competing with the established houses and their British editions. The originators of this trend were India Book House (IBH) and they soon found that there was nothing the older distributors could do to stop them. In the late '70s, Harkin Chaklani, IBH's leading manager broke away and started India Book Distributors (IBD), and found quick success with American editions.

The British publishers are deeply concerned by this erosion of their market but there is little they can do. The cost of keeping up with the violators is greater than the loss in sales. In the process, distributors like Rupa and Co have suffered. An established house that will have 'nothing to do with the Americans', Rupa finds itself at a loss to cope. Mr Shenoy, Manager, Bombay, bespectacled and nervous explains: "Our British editions are generally ten rupees more expensive than the American ones. People like IBD import the US editions and have a run of the market. Recently, Fontana and Pan have had to offer us reductions on the

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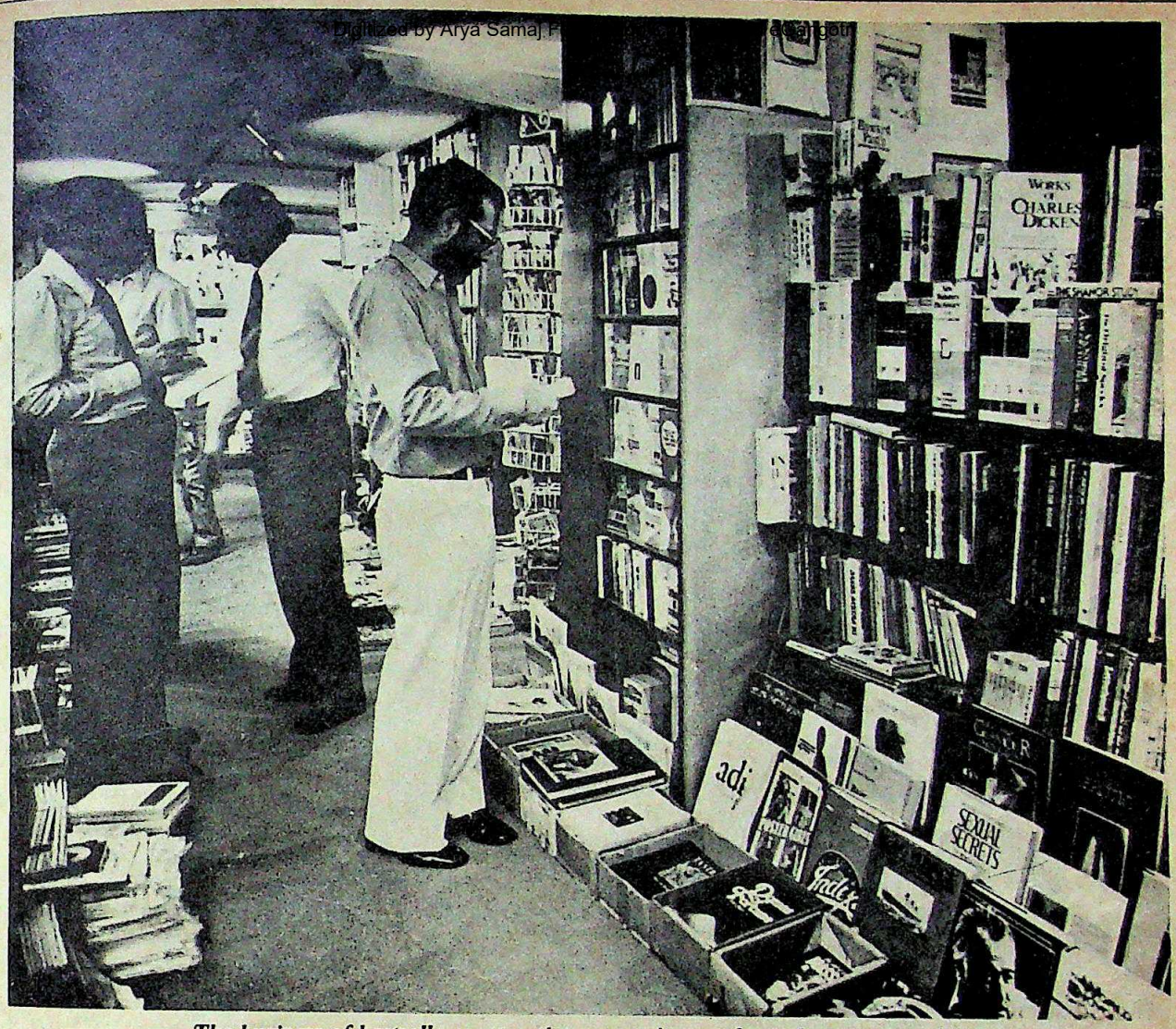

The business of bestsellers: attractive concessions and cut-throat competition.

titles—from £2.50 to £1.75 and so on—to let us compete."

Examples abound. *The Art of Japanese Management* which is out in a paperback edition Penguin, also had American competition. Rupa's sales declined. The only way to sell the book was to get an added concession after contacting the publisher. Sometimes, import orders have to be cancelled altogether when they learn that the American editions are already in the market. Often, to recover their losses, they tear off the cover page and send it back to the publisher for re-imbursement. Recently, IBH were able to beat IBD over *Jane Fonda's Workout Book for Pregnancy, Birth and Recovery*. Though IBD had imported a cheaper American edition, IBH were able to negotiate a lower price with the British publisher and it was the reduced price UK edition that became the bestseller.

Also affecting sales is the problem of hardcover dumping. The tussle between hardcovers and paperbacks is a recent phenomenon. Usually, the paperback edition is imported a year or so after the hardback and so, there is no question of competition. But with the multiplicity of importers and editions, this safeguard has vanished. For instance, Anthony Sampson's *The Moneychangers* was selling well in hardcover at Rs 153, till the paperbacks hit the stands. To stay in the market, the distributors had to slash the price to Rs 50. Says DS Sanvordekar of Bombay's Nalanda bookshop, "We have had to sell so many hardcovers at prices that are only marginally above the paperback." Some instances: Robert Ludlum's *The Parsifal Mosaic* crashed from Rs 140 to Rs 40, Collins and La Pierre's *The Fifth Horseman* from Rs 141 to Rs 40 and MM Kaye's *The Golden Calm* from Rs 250 to Rs 50.

Another reason is the overprinting of hardcovers abroad. The hardcover edition is printed first in the west. The price of the paperback rights depends on hardcover sales. Overprinting the hardcover edition is therefore in the interests of the foreign publishers who are able to claim a greater sale. All the extra, unsold copies can be shipped out to Third World countries at throwaway prices. The scheme works to the advantage of all concerned: the foreign publisher makes up his hardcover losses by the sale price of the paperback rights; the Indian importer gets the book at a very low price competing favourably with any other edition on the market; the Indian consumer, of course, gets a book at the price of a paperback one.

The established distributors remain concerned about the import of 'job lots' or 'remaindered' copies. Because bookshop space in the West, is severely limited, any book that does not begin to sell strongly in the first few weeks after its publication, has its price marked down. Such unsold copies are then sold cheaply as 'job lots' or remaindered lots.

Reputed publishing houses natural-

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Pirate editions: offering readers the latest books at the cheapest prices.

ly look down on the whole business. Says Mr Stan Rebello of Allied Publishers Pvt Ltd, "We are the sort of publishers that do not import job lots so there we lose out. It was started by Gangaram in Bangalore who owns Book Bureau. He got in his books cheap and sold them at a tremendous profit.... The American publisher himself may not sell to the Indian buyer. It is the wholesalers on both sides who are involved in the trade."

Kamlesh Shah, a young entrepreneur who deals almost exclusively in 'job lots', is unruffled by the criticism. "If we can get our books in at a cheaper rate, it is due to our business sense. Why should anybody else object? Look at the gain to the consumer!"

Just as the remainder merchants have pushed importers into a tight corner while benefitting consumers so have the pirates. They offer readers an opportunity to get the latest books at reasonable prices. Importers are also powerless to take action against them because pirates change presses regularly and operate from such obscure locations as Ludhiana. Moreover, no action can be taken against them unless they are caught in the process of printing. Usually therefore, publishers prefer to ignore piracy as an inevitable, parasitic evil.

In a few cases though, action has been taken. Mr Mehra, owner of Rupa, tired of threatening shop owners who kept pirated editions, resorted to police action. Its effects were, however, shortlived.

Says Rebello, "There was a recent case of piracy of *Fools Die* by Mario Puzo. It was a book that fell within our jurisdiction. I phoned up the Additional Commissioner of Police and the place was raided. Unfortunately the shopowners can do us much more harm by refusing to stock our books than we can do them by getting them caught."

The only sensible solution to piracy is to print cheap, Indian editions of bestsellers. Publishing houses like Rupa, who have exclusive rights over Pan and Fontana books, have started re-printing books here. Since pirates can only operate *after* the book has been released abroad, they are increasingly demanding simultaneous re-printing rights in India. The paperback edition of Sidney Sheldon's *Master Of The Game* was released at the same time as the hardcover edition in UK. A great concession to any publisher. Rupa has also done this successfully for Jack Higgins' *Touch The Devil* and Alistair Maclean's *Partisans*. So far no pirate edition of these books has been discovered, since the publishers are selling it cheap (between Rs 15 and 22).

The new set of aggressive entrepreneurs seem to be here to stay. Their deals are quick-thinking, sharp-cutting ones and the customers are rolling in.

The older, more established houses have still to get used to the new, hectic pace of business. This was shown yet again when Salman Rushdie visited India earlier this year. Pan, who had published the British paperback of *Midnight's Children* airfreighted 1,000 copies to capitalize on the publicity generated by Rushdie's visit. However, Rupa, the Indian distributors, sat on the books and failed to get them into the shops. Rushdie was understandably furious when people gave him pirated editions to autograph. However, IBD, sensing the vacuum, at once imported the US edition and distributed it to the shops. *Midnight's Children* sold phenomenally during Rushdie's stay but because of Rupa's sloth, the official British edition lost out.

In this intricate web of intrigue and chaos, the reader is the only one that stands to benefit. Older publishing houses may be forced to close down, newer ones may be ruined by their own deceit but better books are coming in cheaper with a wider choice. And whichever way the book trade may tend to swing, one thing is sure. It will never be the same again.

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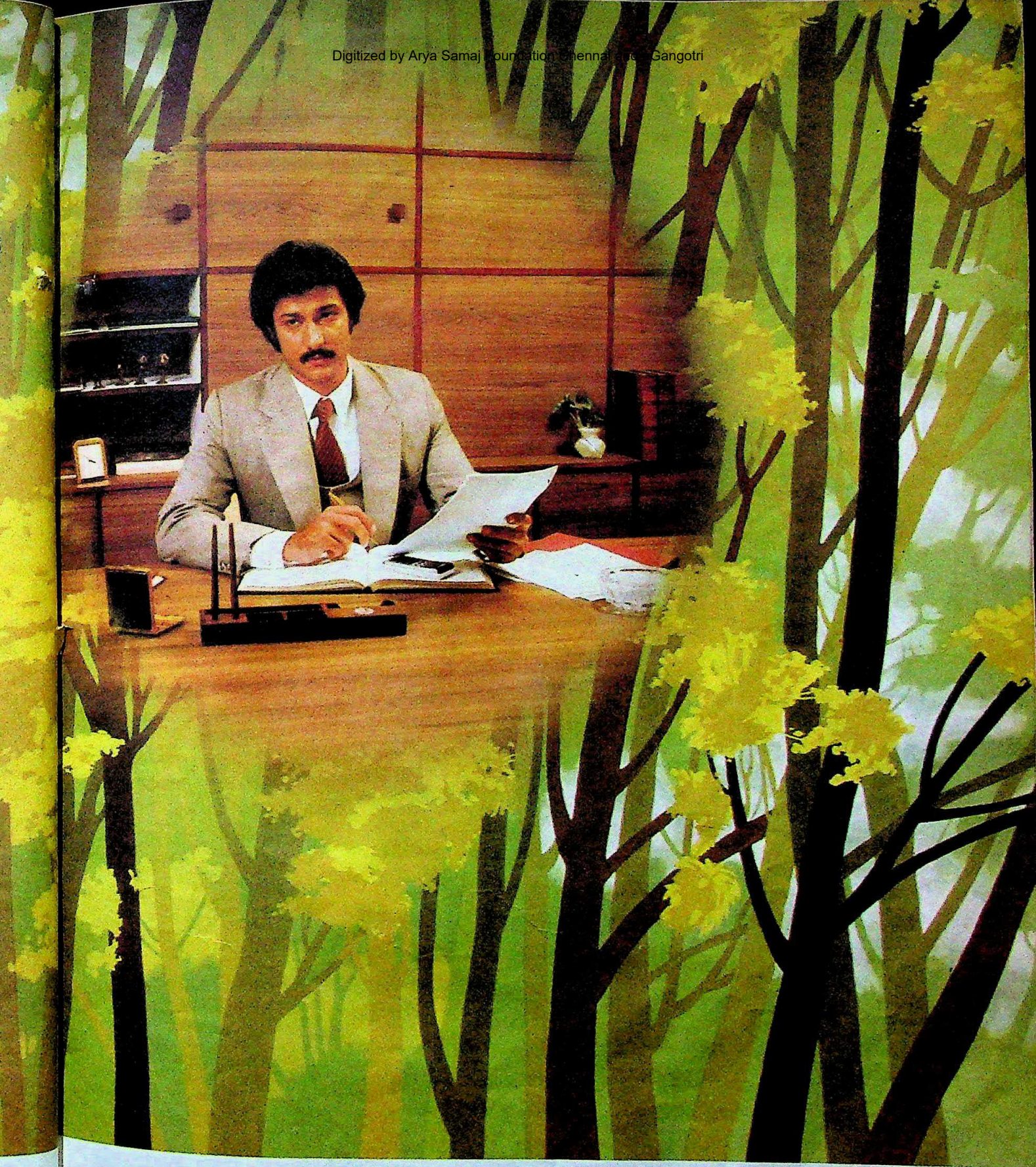

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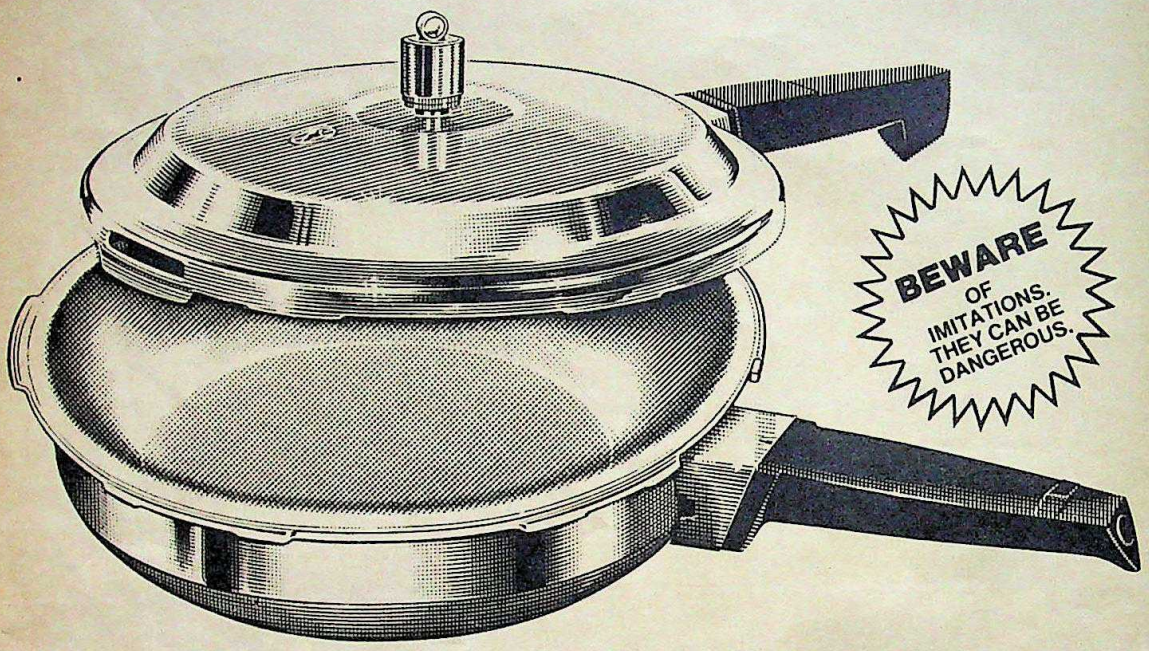

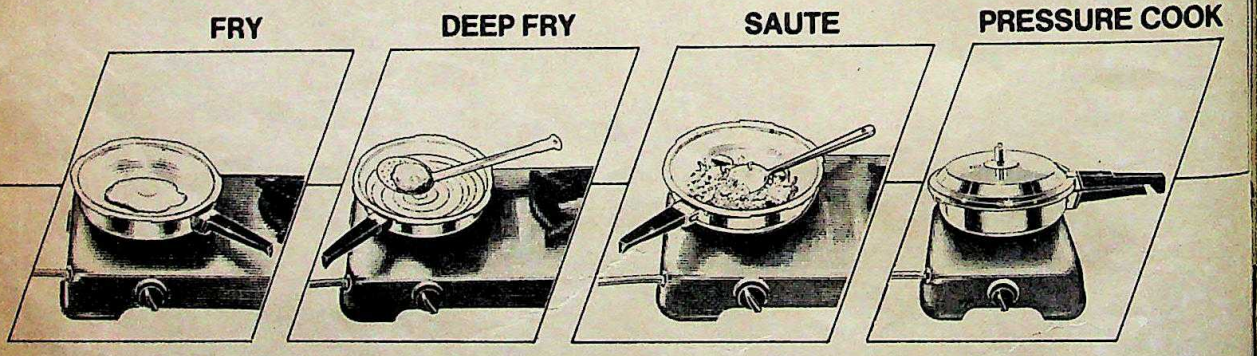

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The New Political Cartoonists

By Madhu Menon

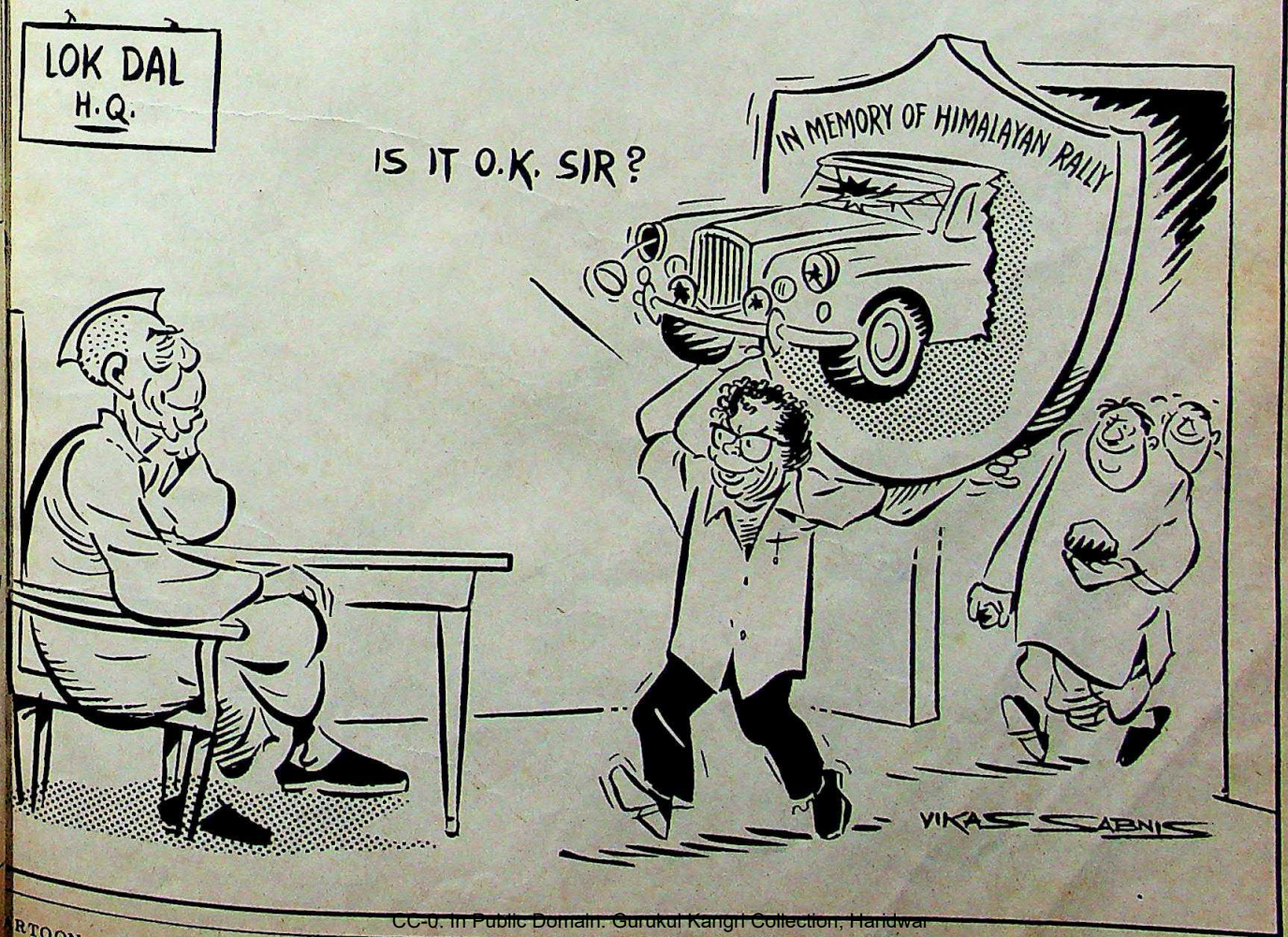
A POLITICAL CARTOONIST IN INDIA CAN NEVER REALLY RUN OUT OF IDEAS. PEOPLE LIKE RK LAXMAN, SUDHIR DAR, ABU AND MARIO HAVE ESTABLISHED themselves as first-rate cartoonists with their direct, daily attack on our seemingly eternal and never-changing rigmarole of loud-talking politicians, spiralling prices, useless telephones, and always, never-ending queues everywhere. Laxman, in fact, has come to occupy a special stature in the *Times of India*—with an 'undisclosed salary'.

Now two relatively new cartoonists are trying to carve out a Laxman-like niche for themselves in the English language press as strictly 'political' cartoonists: Vikas Sabnis, 32, who does daily pocket cartoons for the *Daily* after working for ten years in the Marathi *Mumbai Sakal* and a one year stint with *Mid-Day*; and 'Eskay', the nom de plume of an amateur, Sunday cartoonist (who does not like revealing his name for 'professional reasons') who has made a mark with his *Side-Show* column in the *Indian Express* Sunday section and his caricatures and illustrations in several magazines.

Though they both came into the limelight only in the last three years Sabnis and Eskay differ widely in style and attitudes towards their art: the former is an impassive observer, his cartoons wry comments; the latter is angry and his work simmers with disenchantment and cynicism.

* * *

VIKAS SABNIS IS a looming (he is almost 6' 6"), thin, gangly man with thick-framed spectacles perched on a narrow face. He looks more like a character from the Woody Allen comic strip or one of those slightly dazed IIT *wunderkinds*, than a Marathi speaking



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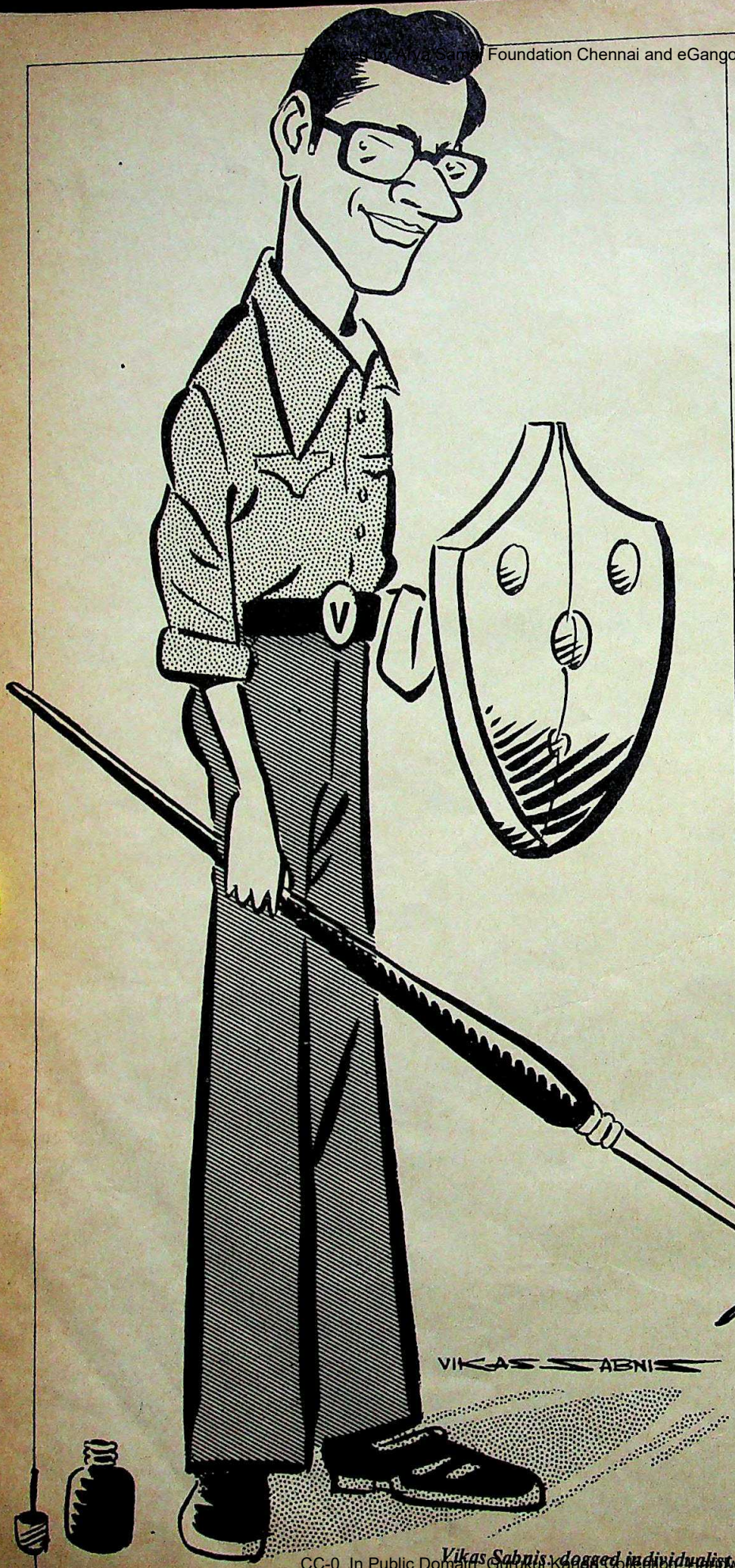

Vikas Sabnis: dogged individualist

cartoonist from Shivaji Park, Bombay very middle class Shiv Sena stron hold. He takes himself very serious and his vocation, even more so.

Every morning, he diligently sca the newspapers and international mag zines like *Newsweek*, poring ov every page, letters and editorials i cluded. "The concept for my da cartoons usually come from this rea ing," he says, "But often I get ide even when I am travelling to offic am constantly alert. Every waki moment of the day, I am looking the world through a cartoonis eyes." But those eyes conceal bias. Sabnis has no clear-cut politi or ideological preferences—any curre topic is a good enough subject for pocket cartoon. "You can never rea run out of ideas for political cartoo in India. Every day there are a hund interesting things happening which inspire a humorous comment, a toon."

Sabnis gets to his drawing board his cubbyhole-like office at the *Da* in the afternoon, when he first wo out different sketches for the conc already in his mind. "To me, the pic ture is the most important part o cartoon—at least 75 per cent of beauty of a cartoon lies in the pictu In fact, the ideal cartoon is one th has no captions at all: the picture s everything."

Fitting an appropriate caption the final sketch comes next and ha Sabnis is often open to ideas from editorial department. But otherw he is a dogged individualist. "I alw work out the concepts for the cartoo myself—no self-respecting cartoo will ever listen to anybody on t point." Added to this fiercely indep dent streak, is a volatile temperam Since he left the JJ School of Ar 1968, Sabnis has switched three and never for mo alone. On one occas he was sent on an ass ment to New Delhi second class train Later he learnt that another known freelancer had also been for the same assignment but with fare. Sabnis' reaction was instant typical: he quit.

Even at the *Daily*, with its Soviet, pro-Indira bias, Sabnis m tains, "I think a cartoonist shou necessarily impartial. When he sides, he stops being a cartoonis

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becomes a propaganda man."

"The biggest challenge for a cartoonist in India," Sabnis adds, "is to fight for his self-respect. Most Indian cartoonists, especially those working with regional or chain newspapers are very badly treated. They are looked upon as mere illustrators to fill up empty spaces on the page. I will never stand for that kind of treatment. Money is not the most important thing for me. Even by freelancing at home, I can easily make about Rs 2,000."

Sabnis can, of course, afford to stand on principles. There is a shortage of talented cartoonists in the English language press today. Says Sabnis, "The new newspapers and magazines are desperately looking out for good cartoonists. It is fairly easy to get a break and if you are really good, you can easily establish yourself and set your own terms."

Like most artists Sabnis finds it difficult to talk about his style and technique. By his own admission, he began by imitating the doyen of Marathi cartoonists: Shiv Sena leader, Bal Thackeray. Sabnis even bears an uncanny facial resemblance to Thackeray, but he insists, "I only admire Bal Thackeray's style. I do not share any of his views." Sabnis' cartoons today, critics say, are only watered-down imitations of RK Laxman, but he maintains, "Over the last ten years, I have evolved my own style."

But some Laxman-like characteristics prevail. Like Laxman, Sabnis is an intensely private person, a family man (he is married and has one son) whose only weaknesses are Dev Anand films and old Hindi film songs ("I hate this RD Burman stuff"). Also, he is terribly unfunny. "The only thing funny about me," Sabnis says, "is that I saw New York before I saw New Delhi. I had visited my brother there." Then, as an after-thought, he adds, "The other funny thing about me is that I get my best ideas in the toilet. I think most good ideas on any subject come in the toilet."

* * *

STOCKY, BEARDED, FORTYISH, a broad forehead, deeply thoughtful eyes. Also a complete cynic. That's Eskay. "I am never interested in a statement a public figure makes, but in the motives behind it. I don't take anything or anybody at face value. And I view all politicians with suspicion. I think this political system is a complete hoax." Strong words indeed, coming as they do from a happily settled family man and professional engineer, who has been publishing cartoons only for the last three years.

Like all cartoonists Eskay started by doodling on school note-books or walls. But he never considered making a career out of cartooning. He had no formal training in drawing or painting and he was also interested in maths and all things mechanical—he once broke a watch to see how it worked. "My interest in engineering and my parents' desire that I should take to it as a profession, made me restrict cartooning to a hobby."

The hobby persisted even as he started on an engineering career, got married and settled down. It was only three years ago that he considered publishing his cartoons. "I felt my children—I have a daughter and a son—were old enough and I have more time to spare now." But equally crucial was the urge to publish. "I felt it was pointless doing a cartoon if no one was going to see it. Besides when you do cartoons for publication and not just for your own pleasure, your range of themes widens."

Since then Eskay has built up a reputation amongst Bombay publications as a consistent and reliable contributor. Though he does change

Eskay: the complete cynic.

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styles to satisfy different editorial requirements, an underlying tone of 'sharp-toothed unkindness' remains. "My cartoons are not meant to be obviously funny," Eskay insists. "Rather, they are intended to be thought-provoking."

His caricatures, he maintains, are unique. "Generally, a caricature is a picture of a person's face with exaggerated features, meant only to look funny. My caricatures try to show some important aspect of the subject, either through pose, attire or expression." Thus in his caricature of Gandhi, which he considers his best, he added a whimsical look to the Mahatma's face, highlighting what he considers the most interesting aspect of his personality. Another kind of message is contained in the caricature of Pranab Mukherjee –he is shown hunting for solutions that have already vanished. Eskay is also rather proud of never having gone to an art school. "I follow no rules, no conventions. If I have to put colour, I just dab any colour where I feel it should go."

While Eskay's sketching style is entirely impulsive, his attitudes to politicians are very thoughtfully worked out. Most of them come from years of reading the edit page of the *Times of India* and though he contributes most regularly to the *Express*, Eskay confesses, "I am basically a *Times* man. Most of my opinions are formed after reading the analysis of Inder Malhotra, Prem Shankar Jha and other editorial writers." However, he does not share the *Times'* general pro-establishment stance. "I feel very strongly about what is happening in the country, about the hypocrisy of all our politicians, all the double-talk, about the complete mess we are in."

But if Eskay is angry, he is not an activist. In fact he is quite pessimistic about the role of the intelligentsia in contemporary India. "Yes we have a few people who have, perhaps in sincerity, decided to actively participate in the affairs of the country try to do something concrete. But they are all working in isolation—which is useless. It's just like giving alms to beggar—you are only easing your conscience, you are not really doing good."

So the complete cynic is convinced that unless something drastic happens ("like a messiah makes his appearance") things are going to remain much the same. "We will move on, but in slow motion." And so will Eskay continue to play the role of the disenchanted, angry and often vicious funny observer.

But now he has conceived an entirely comic strip which has no political overtones at all—"It is just something very funny like Woody Allen's strip." But he will not give further details. "You will till I have finally executed it," he says excitedly.

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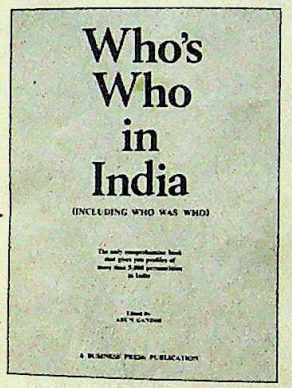

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Justice JC Shah

Photographed By Nitin Jhaveri

'OF THE SHAH Commission', is the common appendix that most people add verbally or mentally when they talk of Justice JC Shah, the erstwhile Chief Justice of India, who performed magnificently a task that many others would have reduced to an unseemly farce or an unjust inquisition. Yet there is nothing pretentious about Justice Shah and he seems untouched by his fame. Sitting comfortably in his pyjama and shirt with gold buttons, among his dearly-loved law books and in the stark simplicity of his library, he says with characteristic humility, "It was a matter of duty, nothing more. A judge does not feel personally involved in any case he tries."

His favourite room reflects his personality. Stark to the point of being bare it has no carpet, no fancy paintwork, no beautiful furniture, nothing that isn't simple and functional. Twenty cabinets of law reports, judgements, court decisions, and income tax cases crowd the uneven walls. Several unlovely chairs, a couple with broken seats that must be used by anybody who comes to consult with the Justice from the Singhanias to his son; and in one corner, an overflowing desk and chair, make up the furniture. "It serves as my consulting room, my library and my retreat." It is the haven he has returned to from the cloisters of the Supreme Court and the maximum security chambers of the Commission.

A judge's life is a lonely one and Justice Shah spends most of his spare time in this spartan room, rarely socialising except for a routine rubber of bridge at the Willingdon Club every evening. The clutter of books and notes and references on his desk are in an order that only he understands. His three-year-old granddaughter Sonal, whom he dotes on, runs around in the room among the scattered chairs and tables, but never touches a thing. "She knows she shouldn't," he laughs. A wooden chest by his desk contains notes on a company law book that he is editing and over one cabinet lie bound volumes of assorted opinions he has given over the past ten years.

Once upon a time you could see the sea from the window at the far end of the room. "It was a beautiful view and there was a fine breeze all day." The concrete jungle on Pedder Road and Warden Road in South Bombay have totally obscured the sea, but the fresh breeze is still there.

The old building on Carmichael Road, in which Justice Shah has lived intermittently since 1950, is built like a castle. "Even the bedrooms are semi-circular," he says. This room in particular is shaped very oddly. An uneven polygon, it looks like an adjunct to the house, an afterthought. It boasts several features that could only be described as architect's mistakes. A space at the far end of the room and at right angles to it, has been carelessly converted into an alcove that is as useless as it is inaccessible. An arch from the entrance of the building, which the room overlooks, protrudes into it. The architect has camouflaged it with a queer wooden bench. Justice Shah finds them both quaint.

Justice Shah is a confirmed workaholic. In the quiet of his room, he can indulge himself to the fullest. Law is his life. "But it is an acquired taste. I wasn't born into a lawyer's family." His father was the executive head of a small princely state in North Gujarat and only one of his four children is a lawyer. Justice Shah has never thought of doing anything else and today at 77, he runs a flourishing company law and taxation law practice and is also Chairman of the Board of Directors of *The Statesman*, President of the Ramakrishna Mission, Bombay and on the board of the Press Trust of India.

"If I have nothing to do, I think I will just fall apart. I have been accustomed to eight to ten hours of work every day for the past 50 years and even the doctors have advised me to continue my practice or they fear I will disintegrate."

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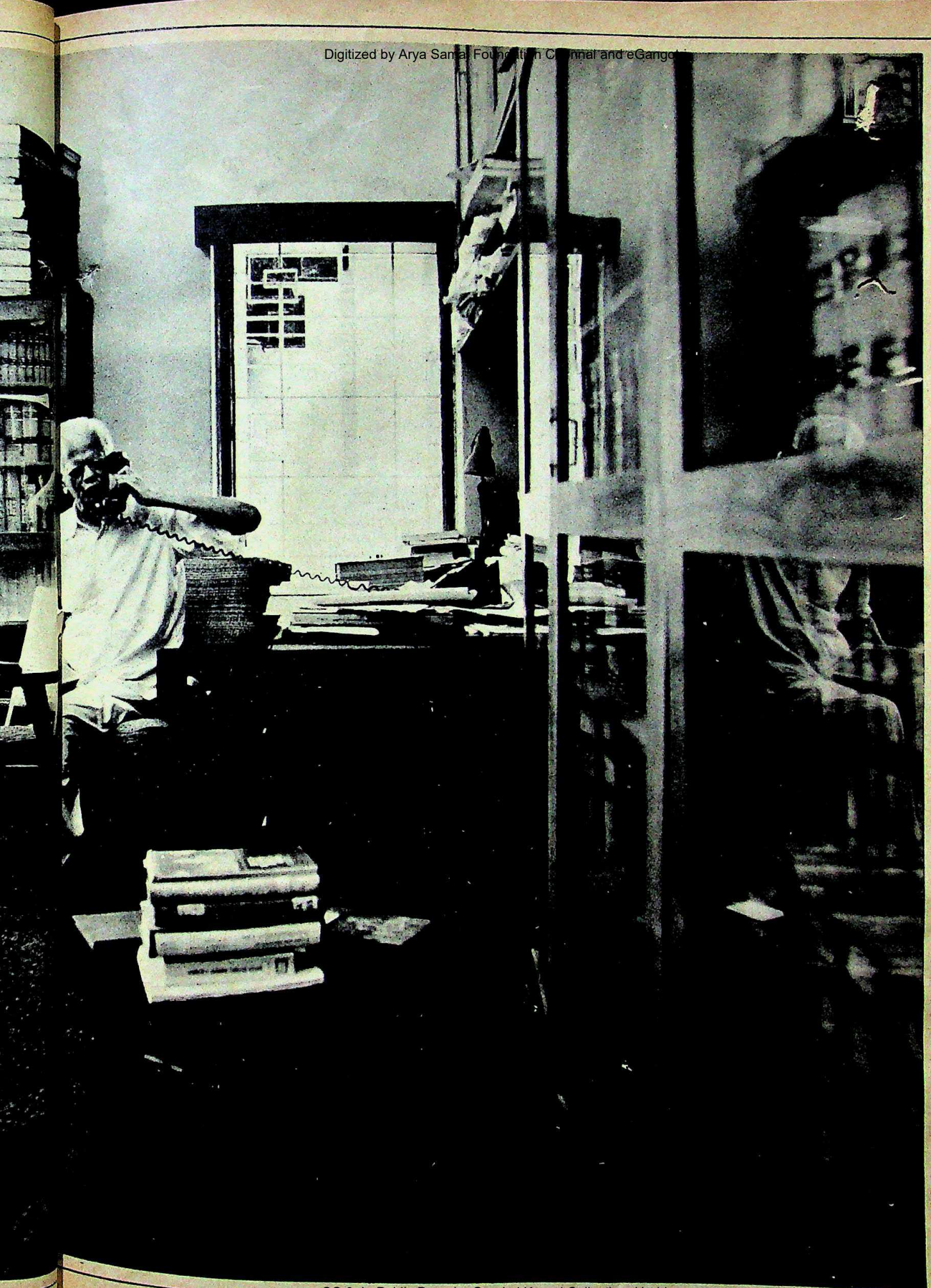

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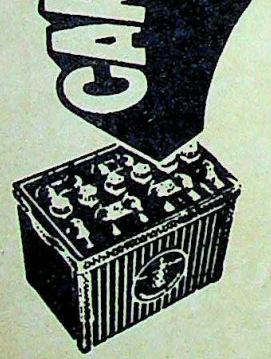

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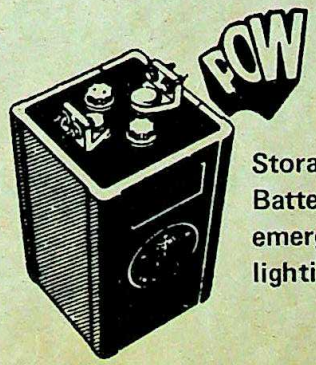

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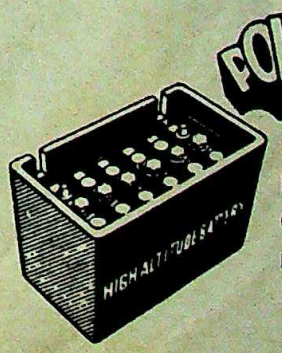

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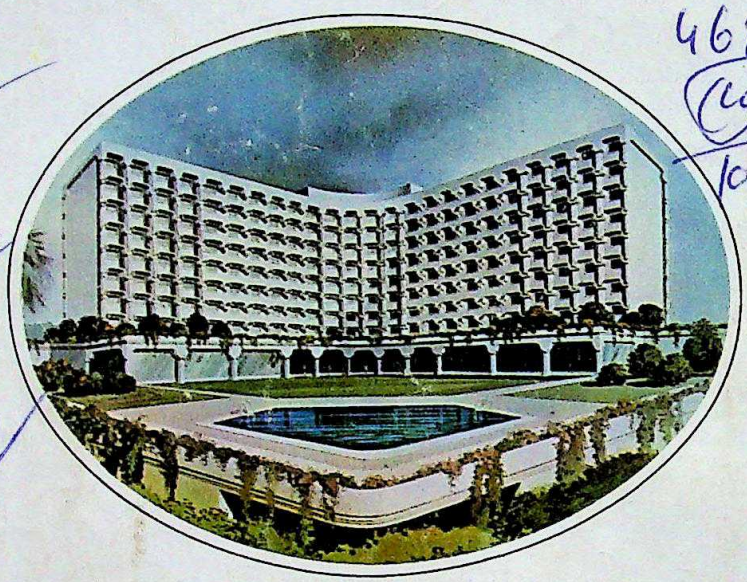

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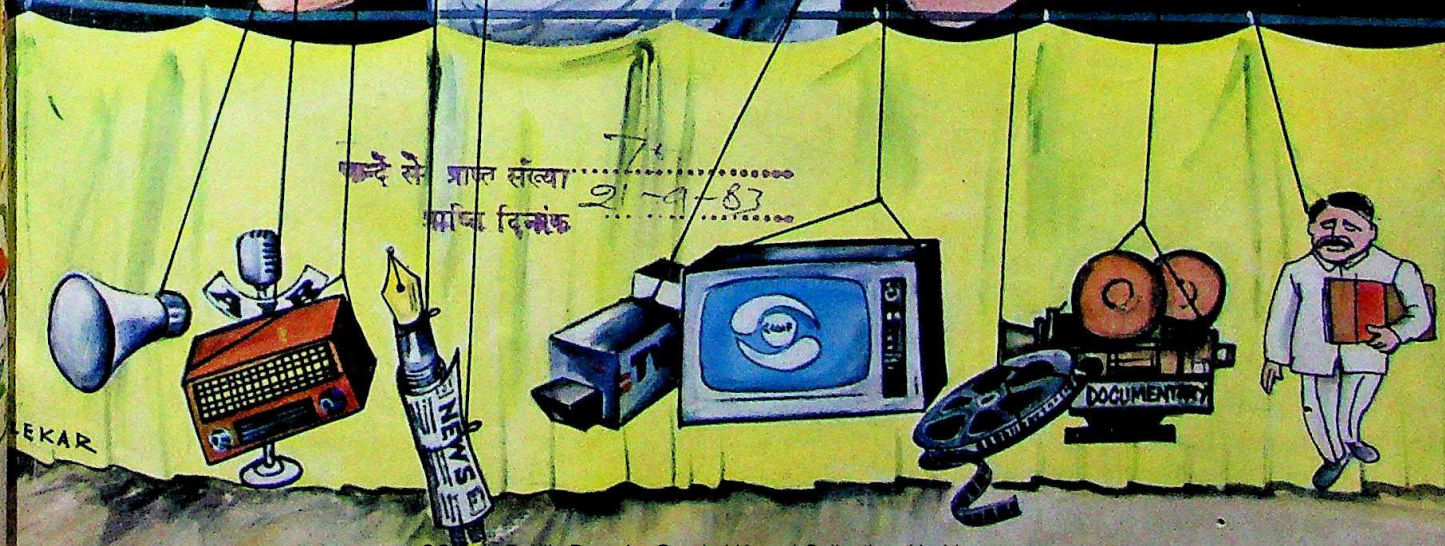
RULERS OF THE AIR

The Politics Of Public Broadcasting

An Imprint-Pathfinders Opinion Poll



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ON THE MARQUEE

". . . . I believe no life is worth a lie. Things are either right or wrong and life is worth living only if one acted with some consistency. To submit, to yield and to surrender to the forces of operation is to give ourselves to despair. But to act, to resist, no matter how puny the resistance, still preserves for us a hope that we stand erect."

—Benigno S Aquino Jr*
From solitary confinement in the Philippines, 1976

Behold.

Act I. 1972:

Ferdinand S Marcos, President of the Philippines, imposes martial law on the country, suspends elections scheduled for 1973 and jails his rival for office, Benigno Aquino. Aquino languishes in jail.

Act II. 1976:

Aquino sentenced to death by a military tribunal—charged with murder, subversion and possession of firearms. Charges of murder, subversion are disapproved but Aquino still in jail, now in solitary confinement. The sentence stays.

Act III. 1980:

Aquino suffers coronary ailments. A broken man now, he is persuaded to sign a document requesting pardon so he can go to the United States for heart bypass surgery. He agrees not to agitate against Marcos while abroad.

Aquino recovers from surgery. Teaches at Harvard University and later at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Martial law is lifted in 1981. But the dictatorship continues. In the meantime, what is inevitable in a dictatorship happens in the Philippines: the economy sinks, lawlessness spreads, the majority of people suffer in silence and in poverty, the Marcoses celebrate—each one is more spectacular than the other. The President bestows on his wife a string of important offices.

Act IV. 1983:

Marcos says he will hold elections in 1984. Aquino says he is returning home. In interviews with journalists and in statements to the Press in early August 1983, Aquino says he is returning to the Philippines because 'time is running out for non-violent solutions to his country's problems' and that "I dread a revolutionary confrontation. It would be suicidal," and that he was going home to talk to Marcos. "I feel that after I go home and turn myself bodily over to Marcos, it will be the best proof that I am not really out to overthrow him," Aquino adds.

On Friday, August 19, 1983, General Fabian Ver, the Armed Forces Chief of Staff, declares in Manila that Aquino will not be allowed to land in the Philippines. He was also threatened with arrest. (Aquino's Filipino passport has expired and the government has refused to renew it.) The government also says that Aquino is the target of the assassination plot. "I do not think the whole military could protect him," says Imelda, wife of Marcos.

Act V: The Manila International Airport, afternoon of Sunday, August 21, 1983:

The crowd estimated to be around 30,000 waits outside the airport. There is tight security. A China Airlines plane coming from Taiwan taxis to a halt. Armed guards go aboard and arrest Aquino. They take him to a nearby van. There is a flurry of shots.

*

The government of President Ferdinand Marcos says that Aquino was murdered by a known assassin, dressed as an aircraft maintenance worker. But he was shot dead within seconds by the armed guards. Even 48 hours after the murder, the government of Marcos has not identified the killer.

* * *

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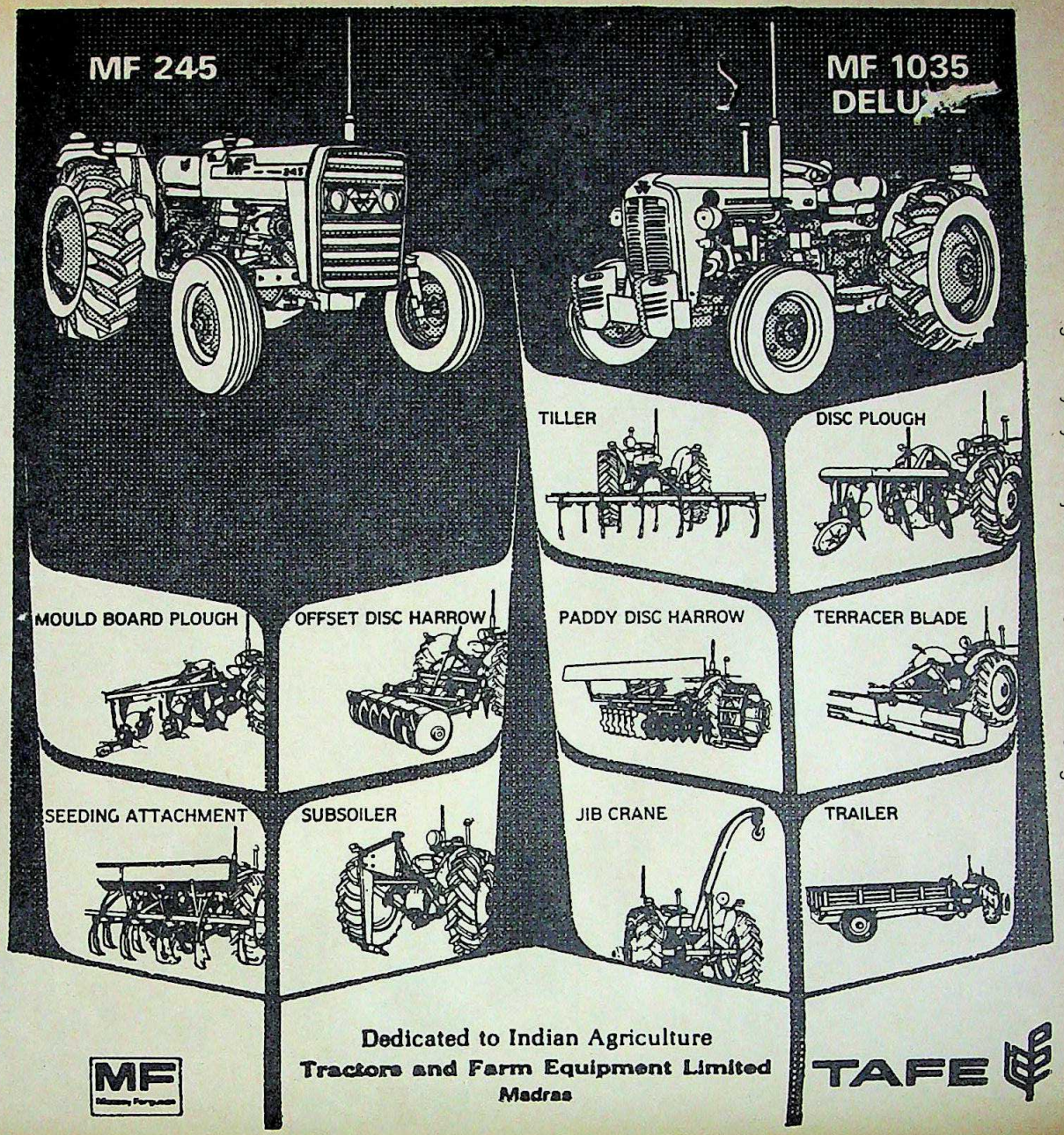

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President Marcos, in a statement read on television warns 'opportunistic elements' against trying to take advantage of the situation to foment disorder, anarchy and chaos. He says the government would respond to any such attempt 'with all the legal force that may be necessary'.

* * *

The Filipinos have not risen. The ASEAN is silent, the Americans have not said much, the Pope of Rome has said nothing, President Ronald Reagan has not changed his plans to visit the Philippines in early November 1983.

* * * *

Reflect. Let us reflect on how our civilisation is marching on!

R. V. Pandit

August 23, 1983

* Forty-nine this year, Aquino was the youngest Filipino war correspondent at the age of 18. He was covering the Korean War in the very early '50s for the *Manila Times*. He went on to become the youngest mayor and the youngest governor of a province in the Philippines. Until Marcos declared martial law in 1972 and suspended the 1973 elections, Aquino was confidently expected to win that Presidential election and dislodge Marcos.

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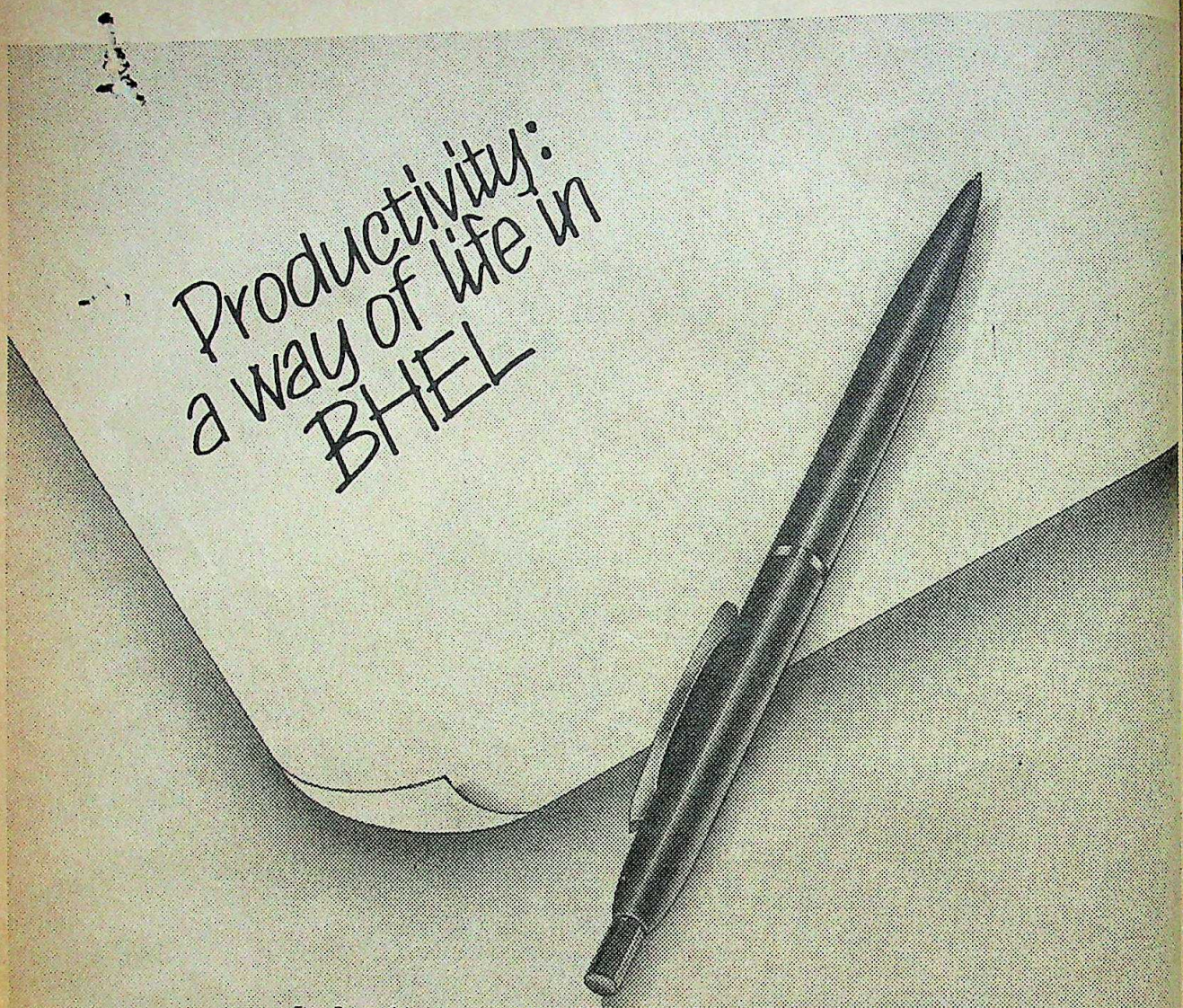

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Dr. A.N. Saxena, Director General, National Productivity Council, in a letter dated 8th April 1983 says "I am particularly struck by the motivational approach which has been made permissive and which has generated a psyohology in favour of productivity in the entire BHEL system with specific productivity improvements in areas like energy and fuel, materials consumption, process improvement and other related fields."

An ILO expert, Mr P.A. Neck, in a communication has invited BHEL to join an International network on productivity. In his letter of 11th March 1983 he says, "May I take this opportunity to congratulate you on the obvious success being achieved by BHEL in the field of productivity improvement".

Such observations have enthused BHEL to further gear up productivity efforts, and have opened vistas for extended cooperation within the nation and abroad.

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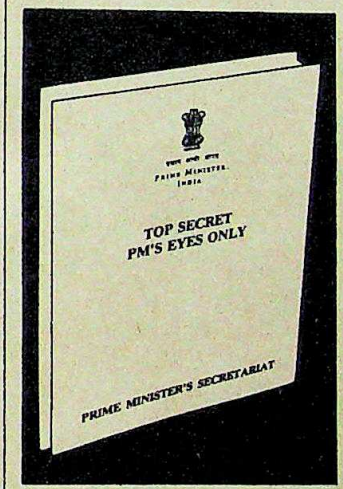

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FOLLOW-UP

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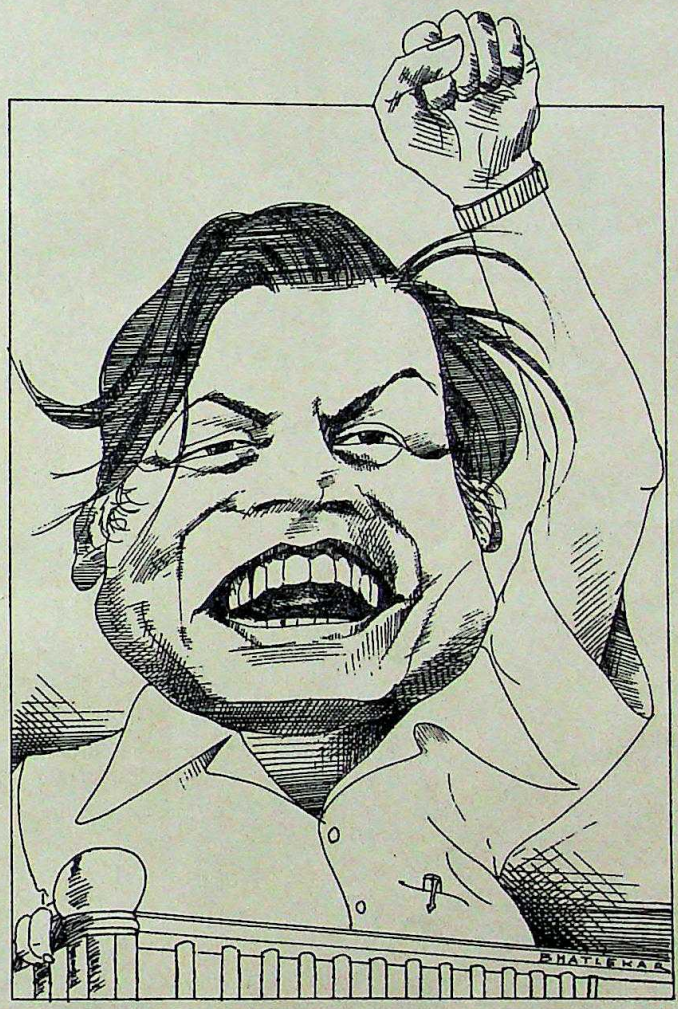
BY SUSHMA SINGH

MR ANTULAY GETS AHEAD

Kissa Kursi Ka and a sense of déjà vu.

WHEN JUSTICE LENTIN delivered his famous judgement in the writ petition brought against the then Chief Minister, AR Antulay, public faith in the courts and the legal process seemed to gain a new lease of life. Yet while that judgement directly led to Antulay's ouster from office it brought no penal proceedings against him. Criminal proceedings are the only way of countering the likes of Antulay, Arun Shourie had written, shortly after his 1981 exposé of Antulay's corrupt practices.

Two years later, criminal trial of Antulay is yet to begin and last month the case suffered a major setback. Special Judge, RB Sule, passing judgement in an application made by Antulay's lawyers, ruled that since the accused is an MLA, sanction of the legislative assembly is required before he can be prosecuted under the Prevention of Corruption Act.



The Sule judgement, which left the prosecution visibly stunned, was the first victory of Antulay's lawyers who have been stalling the commencement of the trial by raising several basic objections. Last year, when the case came up in the court of Special Judge, PS Bhutta, shortly after the Governor's sanction was granted, the defence lawyers had argued that a private complainant has no jurisdiction to bring criminal proceedings under the Prevention of Corruption Act. The aged but brilliantly agile Karl Khandalavala, as Antulay's principal counsel, had also argued that the law requires a particular Special Judge to be nominated by the state government to try cases under specific categories. Since no such order had been passed by the government, Khandalavala argued, no Special Judge could hear the case.

While Ram Jethmalani, counsel for the complainant Ramdas Nayak, went in appeal to the High Court, the Babasaheb Bhosale ministry passed an order specifying RB Sule as the Special Judge for cases like the one brought against Antulay. The issue of a private complainant's *locus standi* was decided in favour of the prosecution by the Bombay High Court and Antulay's appeal on that issue is still pending before the Supreme Court.

The principal issue raised before Judge Sule, by Antulay's lawyers was that as an MLA, Antulay is a public servant. Since a public servant can only be tried under the Prevention of Corruption Act with the sanction of the authority which has the power to remove him, in the case of an MLA the legislative assembly's sanction must be sought. Jethmalani cited British precedents in his argument that members of parliament, and consequently MLAs, 'are not public servants' for the purpose of such prosecutions.

The prosecution argued logically that if Antulay's claim is accepted it will become impossible for any legislator of the ruling party to be tried on charges of corruption.

Moreover, section 6 (2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act states: "Where for any reason whatsoever any doubt arises whether the previous sanction required under subsection (I) ..... such sanction shall be given by that government or authority which would have been competent to remove the public servant from his office at the time when the offence was alleged to have been committed."

Since the offences allegedly committed by Antulay were possible only in his capacity as Chief Minister, the prosecution has argued, the Governor's sanction alone is sufficient.

The Supreme Court will now primarily have to settle the issue of a private complainants *locus standi* and the validity of Sule's ruling that an MLA is a public servant.

Yet within days of the Sule judgement, Antulay was touring Konkan his native region, with the look of a major leader in power and speculation about the political re-ascent of Antulay had begun afresh. Thus all the evidence notwithstanding, Antulay and his trusts seem set to go the way of the *Kissa Kursi Ka* case—lethal weapons in the hands of opponents, rendered obsolete by rapidly changing political equations. ◆

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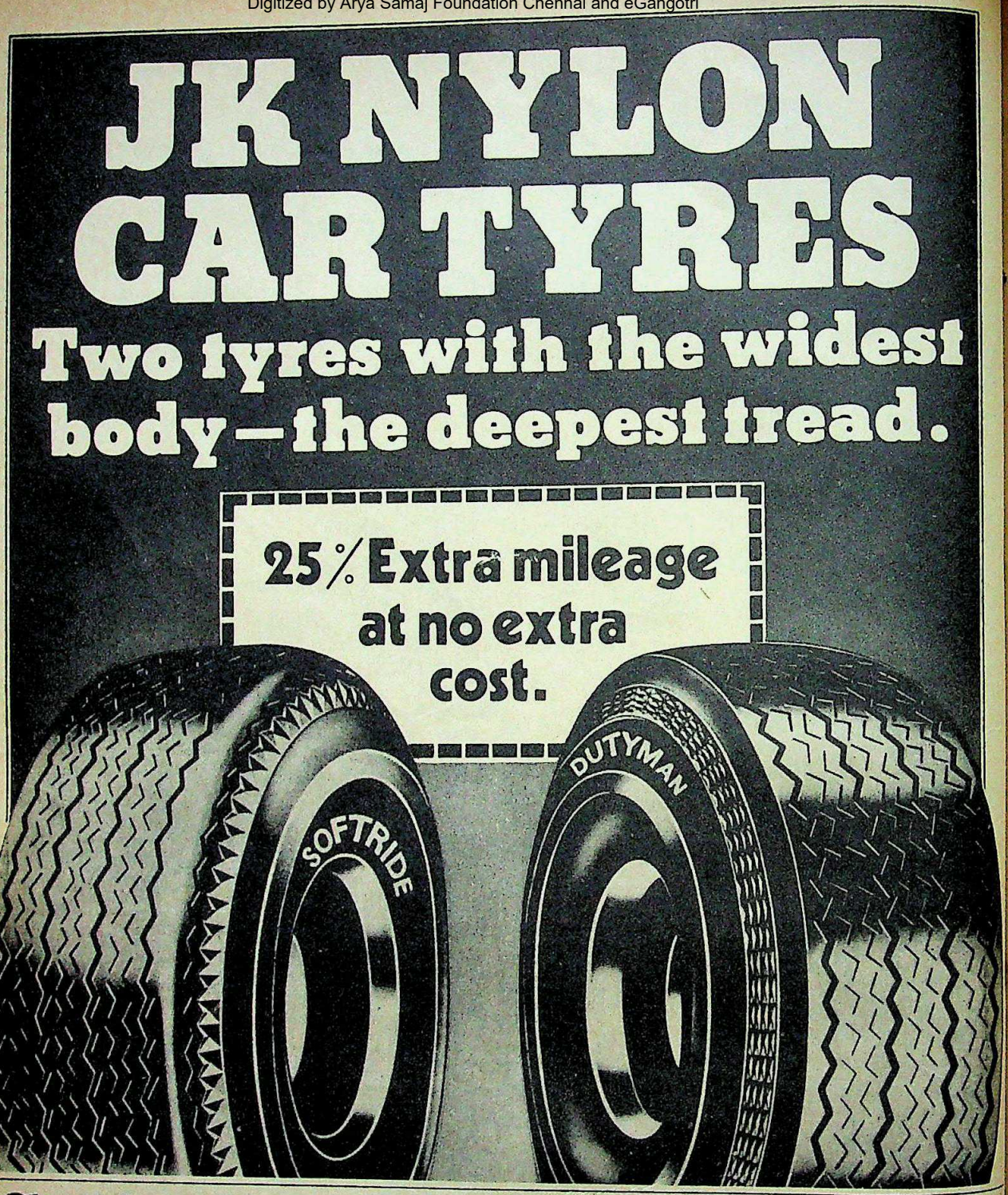
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BY ASHOK GOPAL

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR

Our reaction to Sri Lankan events displays our double standards.

THE INDIAN REACTION to killings of 294 Tamils is a classic example of senseless mass hysteria. *Oh Hell!, Second Bloodbath In Lanka Jail, Nation Shares Anguish, Tiger, Tiger Burning Lanka!*, our papers screamed from July 23 (when the riots started) till August 1 (when the violence had abated) as both, disaster-hunting journalists and publicity-hungry politicians worked themselves into a frenzy of 'pain and anguish'. The reaction—especially the headlines (*Genocide!*)—was unjustifiably wild and out of proportion to the actual facts and figures of the tragedy. Of course, it is wrong to judge the depth of a tragedy in terms of dead bodies but nevertheless, the real extent of the Lanka riots needs to be recalled to understand the drama of 'anguish' painted by our journalists and politicians.

On July 23, 13 soldiers were killed in the northern district of Jaffna by extremists (presumably Tamil). That caused the riots and on July 24 our papers reported several people had been shot dead in Colombo and other towns of Sri Lanka. On July 26, 37 Tamil activists were slain in the Welikade jail in Colombo and as riots spread to more areas, some national papers quoted the official death toll as 71. One agency report also claimed with a veneer of authenticity: "One million Tamil refugees were *preparing* to flee to Jaffna." (italics mine). On July 27 another 17 inmates of the Welikade were killed and on July 29, 33 more. By July 31, the killings had stopped and our press shifted its attention to Narasimha Rao's pontifications.

Ashok Gopal, an **Imprint** *staffer, is also the author of a profile of Vasant Gangavane elsewhere in this issue.*

("The most crucial point is the root cause of the present problem and how to deal with it. . .") On the first two days of the riots, several Indian newspapers claimed an 'unofficial' death figure of 2,000: By August 2, all newspapers had mysteriously agreed that it was 'above 200'.

That figure is significant in a way. If we look at records of communal and caste outrages in our own country, the Sri Lankan variety of 'genocide' has happened here several times in the last few years. Surely the tragedy in Assam, both in terms of the number of innocent people killed and systematic terror (Assam has been 'burning' for years now, unlike Sri Lanka's four days of hell) is far deeper. Yet have we ever seen Central Government sponsored *Bandhs*, nation-wide protest marches (many violent), high-sounding declarations from politicians of every hue (Indira Gandhi to Jagjivan Ram and Maneka Gandhi), or calls for United Nations peace keeping forces, after the Nellie massacre when, even by government admissions, more than 700 people were killed? Have any of the politicians who now growl that they are prepared 'to pay any price to protect our brothers in Lanka' ever shown concern for the scores of orphaned children of Nellie?

Yet, when Narasimha Rao made a 'dash' (a special journalistic cliché reserved for occasions when politicians fly to crisis areas to hog publicity) he had no compunctions about outpouring his 'grief'.

There are, of course, obvious reasons for this sort of behaviour. Expressing sympathy for any killings of innocents is undoubtedly a noble sentiment but for a politician it can be a dicey thing. When you sympathize with innocent tribals in Assam you are inviting the wrath of those who were after their blood: other Indians, potential voters. . . But when you cry about Tamils in Lanka, you are on safe ground. No Indian is going to object to that and the only people who are going to get resentful are Sri Lankans, and of course, there are no Sri Lankans in India, none who can vote anyway! We have to take note of this with shame. After all, false and motivated sympathy is certainly more disgraceful than no sympathy at all.

One of the most disturbing aspects of any politico-human tragedy is that the victims, and their supporters and leaders, inevitably come out as wounded heroes. The Indian press has sud-

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Our outcry over the Lanka killings smells of false emotions and sensationalist motives.

denly woken up to the long-standing 'Story of Tamil Persecution' (not first-hand of course; it was fed by a London-based Human Rights Organization). Consequently the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) has also come in for a lot of favourable coverage. This is rank hypocrisy. The TULF is essentially a separatist organization, like the Khalistan lobby or the '50s-style DMK. Any organization such as the TULF would at once be banned in India and hounded by the police. Even the DMK which now leads the Indian protest against Lanka, has long since quietly compromised its separatist ideals, for political advancement. (Interestingly the TULF was a recognized party in Lanka until the recent constitutional amendment and held seats in the national parliament.) The TULF also espouses violence, very much like our so-called Naxalites. Yet have Khalistanis or Naxalites ever got as much sympathy from the press or our politicians as the TULF? And don't we all know how they are treated by our police and our government?

This is not to suggest that the Lanka tragedy was a minor one and undeserving the attention of our media and our politicians or that Lanka's Tamils are not being persecuted by their government. The point is simply this: given our official and public reaction to massacres in our own country our outcry over the Lanka killings smells of false emotions and sensationalist motives.

In purely diplomatic terms our government's hullabaloo smacks of big brotherly talk. The Sri Lankan press' reaction to this is interesting. "What concern did she (Indira Gandhi) show when people of Indian origin were thrown out of Uganda and when Burma kicked them out?", asks one newspaper column.

DMK president M Karunanidhi's resignation from the Tamil Nadu Assembly in protest against what he calls, 'the Centre's inaction' on the Lanka developments adds a farcical touch. A man, whose record as Chief Minister includes scandal and violence is clearly trying to whip up public passions and blackmail MGR and Indira Gandhi. Since Mrs Gandhi is obviously not going to send Indian troops to Lanka (as the DMK demands) Karunanidhi hopes to emerge as the lone and courageous saviour of Tamils. It is certain that when the next elections come around he will play up this role against the 'indifference' of MGR and Indira Gandhi. Of all the possible political gimmicks, grandiose displays of sympathy for the suffering or the underprivileged is perhaps the hardest to beat.

Fortunately, some degree of good sense has prevailed, both in the corridors of power and the press. On August 2 the *Indian Express* editorialised, ". . . the Government of India and Indian opinion should take the greatest care not to confuse Tamil with Indian. Even indirectly to do so would imply encouragement to separatism while enhancing Sinhala fears of some kind of greater Tamil dominance." Perceptive and dispassionate observers would have also noted the striking similarity between our government's pronouncements on the Lanka killings and the Arab and Pakistani reactions to communal riots in India.

Yet the fallout of this hasty and hypocritical shouting, in terms of strained relations and an ugly big brother image is going to take a long time to dispel. Our official hypocrisy will also be noted with great interest in international forums. One example of our double-dealing suffices. Our government protested to Sri Lanka about one of its 'black' emergency laws that allows authorities to dispose of the body of a victim of violent death without an inquest; such laws exist in India as well and have often been used for similar purposes. If our protest is to be taken as a genuine grievance surely it is the most extraordinary case of loving thy neighbour more than your own family? ♦

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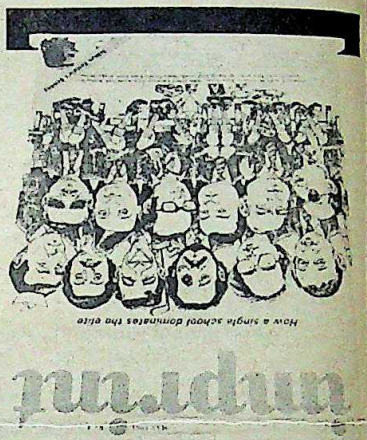

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BY VIJAY SAHNI

FISH AND CHAPPATIS

The Brits are trendy; but the Indians are richer.

THE MARK OF a great city is that it adapts itself to each new decade while pretending to always remain the same.

In a sense, London never changes. The crowds outside Buckingham Palace still long for a glimpse of the Queen; the tabloids always scream their lurid headlines and year after year debutantes 'come out' in grand style.

But beneath the veneer of timeless elegance and less elegant action, London changes all the time. In the '60s, Cockney photographers, Yorkshire-born painters and Liverpudlian musicians partied till the city itself seemed to swing. In the '70s, the drag queens and lurex-clad monstrosities of the glitter-era were soon replaced by the safety pins, spiky hair cuts and razor blades of the punks.

In the '80s, new bright young things, poncho-wearing New Romantics and bespectacled electronics wizards have taken over.

* * *

BUT THESE ARE side-shows. Despite its fashionable exterior and its apparent hangover of Me-Decade neo-conservatism (read 'greed'), London has actually undergone a more significant metamorphosis—one that Brits, naturally, are less willing to recognise.

In the early years of the century, London was the Queen of the Empire. Native potentates prostrated themselves before the King-Emperor and Britannia made the rules. By the '50s and the '60s, the Empire had gone but the Brits still saw no reason to waive those rules. West Indians, Pakistanis and Indians arrived by the boatload. Ready to shovel shit, conduct buses and sweep floors, they contributed to the illusion that nothing had really changed. The Empire may have been lost but enough of its former subjects were still in evidence. Even the Jews—immigrants in an earlier era—still lacked entry into the right circles.

By the '70s, this was beginning to change. The Paks had stopped cleaning bogs and while enough West Indians still drove the buses, a fair number were learning to throw petrol bombs and teach the racist police force a lesson or two. And with the oil price hikes, the Arabs came streaming in, buying up everything that was on offer—and a lot that wasn't.

Now, in the '80s, London has finally come to terms with this new reality. From being Queen of the Colonies, it is now the Whore of the Empire.

The language of London is money and most of it is in foreign hands. The Kuwaitis can create havoc on the Stock Market simply by flinging about some loose change, the casinos reverberate with the singsong accents of the Sindhis and Indian-owned companies are the new darlings of the City.

Racism still exists. In London's East End or in Bradford, a brown face is often no more than a ticket to the casualty ward of some (about to close) NHS Hospital.

But in moneyed circles, in many of the right places, brown is fast becoming bountiful. Of course, the Asians are a long way away from political power. But in Britain where a Tory Home Secretary and Chancellor are both Jewish, who can deny that the rules of the ethnic game are rapidly altering.

* * *

HOW RICH ARE the UK Asians? This is not an easy question to answer. Certainly, there is a lot of money being flung about. Corniches and Silver Shadows, holiday villas on the Cote d'Azur, Hampstead mansions and pneumatic white girlfriends are much in evidence. At Tramp, at Tokyo Joe's, at Gavroche, in the lobby of the Dorchester and in the high-priced stores of New Bond Street, Indian accents stand out.

But the fact is that it is becoming extremely difficult to distinguish between a Lagos Sindhi with a net worth of US $20 million and a world class tycoon in the US $100 million bracket. After all, you can only spend *so* much money. After the first US $10 million has been conspicuously consumed, who is to know what your worth is?

The problem is compounded by the

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Vijay Sahni is Literary Editor of Mid-Day *and a regular columnist for that paper.*

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A mathematical genius, Shivdasani was one of the founders of the Eurodollar market.

traditional Indian aversion to paying tax. This means that most of the money is secured in anonymous accounts in Zurich or hidden away in the form of *benami* (where would Indian business be without that word?) assets.

I sat down with one expatriate Indian millionaire and tried to work out how rich he was. "Well," I said, "we can estimate how much your three office buildings are worth, can't we?" It turned out that yes, we could give them a cash value but were they properly his? They were all owned by companies registered in Panama and Liechtenstein.

"OK," I said. "There is your home. That must be worth a million pounds or so?" Again, we agreed that the property had a certain value, but once more, it was in the name of his son. "How can you say it's mine?" he smiled.

And so it went. There were ships. But they flew Liberian flags and were –on the books at least–owned by obscure relatives. "Factories? You must have factories?" I asked. "Oh no," he said, a little outraged. "The money comes from trade." Finally, I gave up.

* * *

A SINDHI BUSINESSMAN explained to me that because his people had lost so much during the Partition, they tried to avoid setting up industry and preferred to keep their money in cash.

There are of course, some notable exceptions.

I think everyone is agreed that the richest Indians in the world are the Shivdasanis of Inlaks. Their fortune was built up by one man: Indur Kumar Shivdasani. The son of a civil servant, Shivdasani went to Clare College, Cambridge, worked for Unilever in London and then turned up in Nigeria many years before his Sindhi brethren discovered Lagos.

Unlike most other expatriate Indians who have struck it rich, Shivdasani decided to pay more attention to concrete achievement than to profit. Because Nigeria did not grow its own food, he invested in new technology that finally led to the development of successful farms. A mathematical genius, he was one of the founders of the Eurodollar market. Virtually everything he touched turned to gold.

Perhaps because he had resisted the temptation to make a quick buck and run, Shivdasani soon made far more money than those who were in it merely for the profit. When he died in the late '70s, he had just turned 60 and was already the richest Indian in living memory.

The Shivdasanis (his wife and children) are a small, low-key family and shun the shameless self-promotion and effusive vulgarity of other expatriate Indians. About the only time the name Inlaks (for Indur and Lakshmi, his wife) hits the papers is when they advertise for applications for their generous scholarship scheme.

Though it is so understated, the Inlaks group is, at least legit. So, it is possible to realise how much it is really worth.

* * *

IN THE CASE of the others, the picture is more complicated. Taken together, the three Sethia brothers must be worth a fortune. But how much? Nobody can say for sure. The Hindujas with their Persian millions are so elusive that estimates of their wealth range from a (relatively) paltry US $200 million to a staggering US $1 billion. It is technically, possible to sit down and work out how much Caparo is worth, but how much of it is Swraj Paul alone? And is it fair to assume that Mr Paul's wealth ends with Caparo? The Chanrais, the Chellarams and the other West African Sindhis are in evidence in London but nobody is willing to put a figure to their assets.

Once you add the SE Asian millionaires–the Parshurams and the Harilelas–the picture becomes even more complicated. And what of Ravi Tikoo? How much of Globtik is Mr Tikoo's own money and how much of it belongs to the banks?

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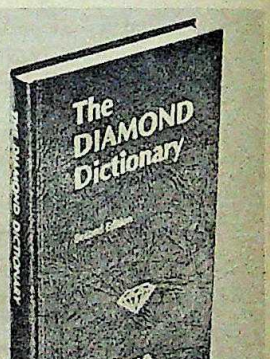

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BY ARUN CHACKO

VIOLENCE AND SOAP OPERAS

Stray thoughts from Colombo, Madras and Delhi.

WHAT MAKES A basically docile, friendly people turn into animals at the drop of a hat? Or for that matter capable of bitter and sustained racial discrimination.

The recent Sri Lanka slaughter of the Tamils has undoubtedly shocked the world and awoken it to one of its most serious human rights problem. But it also shows everyone needs someone to hate, and, when and if the chance comes, possibly kill.

Of course, we cannot afford to be too critical of the Sri Lankans. We too have our Muslim and Harijan pogroms, politely known as communal riots. If you can burn the woman you sleep with and the mother of your children for a little money, what are a few Mussalmans or Harijans.

But the Sri Lanka slaughter nevertheless makes very sad reading, simply because it is a beautiful country with normally peaceable, personable people.

As a regular visitor, my deepest impression is of the former capital, Anuradhapura. On Vesak, believed to be the day of Buddha's birth and also enlightenment, a massive crowd sat around the ancient temples in silent meditation. You could have heard a needle drop and mental peace was contagious. It's impossible to believe these people could kill. But they do. Obviously their attitude to the Tamils is another matter.

* * *

THE TAMILS HAVE suffered the worst kind of discrimination at the hands of all Sinhalese governments ever since independence. The Bandaranaikes institutionalised the discrimination back in 1956 and successive governments, irrespective of their political hue, made it more blatant. They are officially denied the education, jobs and business opportunities they would otherwise have got on merit.

As far back as the late '60s, talented Tamils were knocking around Europe looking for work. Asked why they didn't go home one said, "Being a Tamil makes it very difficult to get employment. Being a Christian in addition makes it impossible."

During British rule, they dominated the professions, government jobs and education. So I questioned a very eminent Sinhalese journalist on the post-independence blatant denial of opportunities and non-recognition of Tamil abilities.

A convincing talker, he went on the offensive. "You see," he said with great confidence, "then the Tamils got the jobs because they were better at Maths." It was difficult to see what good Maths was in medicine, the law and many of the other jobs they then dominated. And it's not as if the Sinhalese have since caught up in Maths or hard work for that matter.

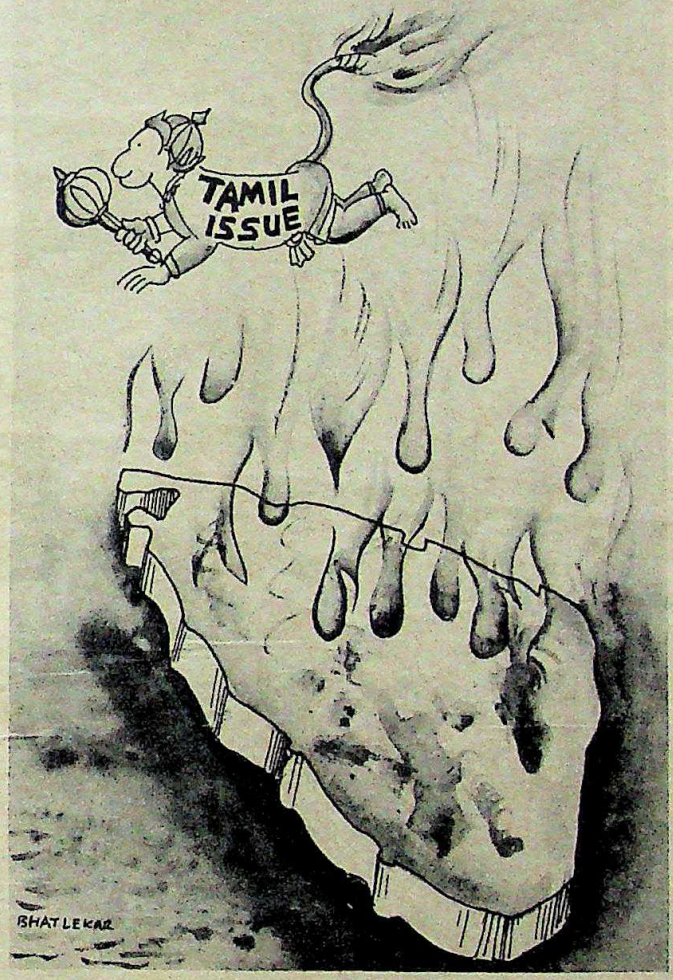
Of course, the tragic aspect of the whole thing is that the situation cannot improve given the deep-rooted Sinhala prejudice, and the psychological and physical scars the Tamils bear. What is most likely is another Lebanon or Cyprus, a festering international sore neither here nor there.

* * *

FUNNILY ENOUGH, OR perhaps not, when the Sri Lankans think of India it's not Bombay or Delhi they have in mind but Madras. The rest of the country is possibly too remote to pose much danger. Not so the great southern metropolis.

Naturally Madras's reaction to Sri Lankan events, especially concerning the Tamils, is fast and furious. Daily airlifted copies of *The Hindu* inform Colombo of that in vivid detail. Rumours also fly through numerous travellers between the two regions.

Sri Lanka responds in kind, not making the basic distinction between sometimes frenzied, irresponsible Madras reaction governed by ethnic, emotional and geographical links and that of the Indian Government. In next to no time, premature allegations are traded. President Jayewardene's publicly expressed fears of an Indian



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Arun Chacko is Associate Editor of Boston's The World Paper. He is based in Delhi and writes frequently on sub-continental affairs.

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Nothing is improved by foreign ministers hugging and kissing especially when both are male.

invasion are a good example.

The other problem is personal. There is no love lost between Mrs Gandhi and the Sri Lankan President. The reasons range from her personal friendship with Mrs Bandaranaike, to a completely different geopolitical viewpoint from the present UNP leadership.

There were always problems with India. But in a crisis Sirimavo would always pick up the phone and have an amicable chat with her good friend, Indira. And the matter would be quickly sorted out.

Jayewardene cannot and is possibly uninterested in, doing that sort of thing. He prefers to capitalise on a shortsighted anti-Tamil, anti-Indian stance, playing to the majority Sinhalese gallery. What is good politically for the UNP in the short term is bound to be disastrous for Sri Lanka in the long run. Such are the fruits of intolerance, a lesson we should quickly learn.

* * *

TOLERATING PEOPLE IS one thing, taking them into your arms quite another. In town recently for the meeting on South Asian Regional Cooperation, we had the bizarre sight of the otherwise distinguished Mr Narasimha Rao bear-hugging Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan of Pakistan, Shamsud Doha of Bangladesh and the rest. I imagine the hair on his chest was fairly singed at the end of it.

The fact of the matter is, not only did it look outlandish, the smothered visitors looked pretty embarrassed too. More important, it was plainly hypocritical. Without exception each of these countries hate our guts and are clearly working against us. We reciprocate in kind. Nothing is improved by foreign ministers hugging and kissing at airports, especially when both happen to be male. So why do it?

If improving relations is the objective, then that is best achieved by being a little more considerate of our neighbour's sensitivities. Each of them is mortally scared of India because of its size and alleged hegemonistic tendencies. We could allay them with a little generosity. But that is not in character with our present government.

The only time our neighbours relaxed and hence were more charitably disposed towards us, was when the Janata Party was in power. But Mrs Gandhi came back to power criticising a regime which permitted our smaller neighbours to 'make eyes at us'. Better making eyes, than bogus hugging and kissing.

* * *

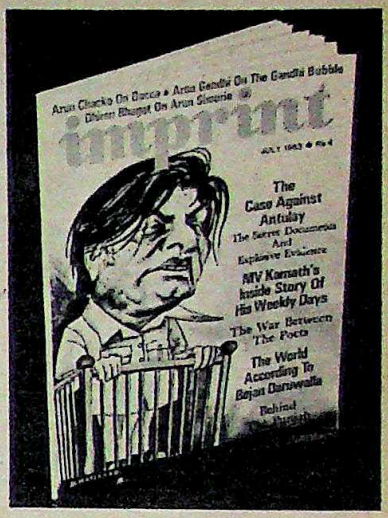
MEANWHILE, THE SWRAJ Paul soap opera continues. Mr Rajiv Gandhi's parliament statement virtually opposing his moves and stray coy voices from the government endorsing it, are obviously red herrings. Mrs Gandhi herself has been ominously silent.

Paul's spate of unprecedented carefully orchestrated public meetings around the country where, like a stuck record, he repeatedly belaboured industrialists for real and imaginary sins, could hardly have been conducted without approval from the powers that be. He is too tied to Mrs Gandhi's apron strings to risk that kind of independence.

Perhaps the most telling pointer that the Bharat Rams' and Nandas' jig is up is the sudden chorus of our progressive press supporting Paul. These left luminaries normally gracing journals like the *Patriot*, *Mainstream* and *Blitz*, should on past form be criticising the move as inducting another form of western imperialism. Instead they are its fiercest backers.

But strange are the ways of the 'left-wing' Indian press; most of us have long given up expecting any sort of consistency from it.

I guess we can now expect non-resident Indians in the Soviet Union to invest billions of roubles they have earned there in the Indian economy. They also won't have to bring in money by the plane-load at election time. ♦



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RULERS OF THE AIR

As fears of misuse of Doordarshan in the coming General Elections increase, the issue of public broadcasting needs to be reopened.

ONE OF OUR PROUDEST boasts is that India has one of the freest presses in the Third World. But this is a hollow claim. As free as the Indian press may be, its impact and influence are severely limited. The real power is that of the broadcasting media—and those are far from free.

The combined readership of all privately-owned newspapers in India is only 19 per cent of the population. Compare this to the audience for broadcasting media. All India Radio (AIR) has a potential audience of over 70 per cent of the population and Doordarshan reaches 19 per cent of all Indians and over half of those who live in the major cities. Another government controlled organisation, the Films Division (FD) has a weekly audience of six crores!

Not only are these broadcasting and media organisations extremely powerful, but they are also widely perceived as being biased. **Imprint** commissioned PATHFINDERS: INDIA, a leading independent research organisation to poll 450 respondents in the metropolitan centres of Bombay, New Delhi, Calcutta and Madras, on their attitudes to government-run media organisations. The results show how low the credibility of Doordarshan, AIR and FD has sunk.

An overwhelming majority of respondents believed that all three organisations were biased towards the ruling party. Seventy-two per cent thought that AIR was biased. Seventy per cent thought Doordarshan was biased and 59 per cent thought FD news reviews were biased. So low is AIR's credibility that 41 per cent thought that the information quality of a foreign radio service, the BBC, was 'very good', while only 12 per cent were prepared to say the same of AIR. Very few respondents thought very highly of the quality of the output of these government organisations. Only eight per cent felt that Doordarshan's programmes were of 'very good' quality and only 14 per cent believed that FD documentaries were very informative. And a staggering 90 per cent felt that there should be a second privately-owned and run TV channel.

Though the PATHFINDERS' sample was restricted to the metropolitan areas, there was a reason for this: urban India accounts for 80 per cent of all radio sets and 97 per cent of TV sets.

It is in these urban centres that the output of government-run media organisations is most noticed. And it is here that it is most discredited.

(continued on page 19)

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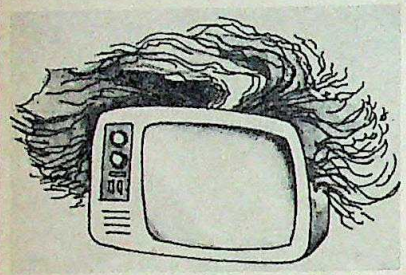
IMPRINT—PATHFINDER'S POLL

PATHFINDERS contacted 450 respondents in the cities of Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras to assess the credibility of the state-run media. The results also appear on pages 5 and 7.

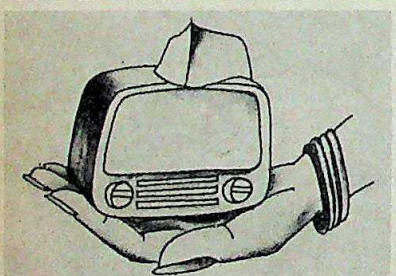
IS TV BIASED TOWARDS THE RULING PARTY?



Doordarshan was widely perceived (by 70%) as being biased.

	All	Bom	Cal	Del	Mad
YES	70	78	52	71	76
NO	24	17	38	20	22
CAN'T SAY	6	5	10	9	2

IS AIR BIASED TOWARDS THE RULING PARTY?



The vast majority (72%) of all respondents detected a bias.

	All	Bom	Cal	Del	Mad
YES	72	73	63	75	78
NO	22	20	32	20	19
CAN'T SAY	5	7	5	5	3

IS FD BIASED TOWARDS THE RULING PARTY?

A majority (59%) felt that FD was biased towards the Congress (I).

	All	Bom	Cal	Del	Mad
YES	59	70	45	49	65
NO	35	25	46	44	32
CAN'T SAY	6	5	9	7	3

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Rajiv Gandhi is the new messiah of the airwaves.

IN A SENSE, THE RESULTS OF the poll are not surprising. Few people would bother to claim that AIR is entirely objective, that Doordarshan holds no brief for the ruling party or that FD does much more than crank out the tired old sycophantic documentaries and shorts. Our recent history abounds with instances of misuse of government media. During the Emergency, Doordarshan promoted 'youth leader' Sanjay Gandhi with a fervour that even Kim I1 Sung would have found embarrassing. Mrs Gandhi's mundane utterances on the virtues of discipline and her Emergency were repeated *ad nauseum* by all government media organisations and FD treated the Twenty Point Programme as though it was a divine revelation.

Since then the style has been more low-key but the abuses have continued unchecked. Rajiv Gandhi, MP is the new messiah of the air waves, opposition politicians are shadowy figures who get brief mentions at the end of news broadcasts and each bulletin can find no more important a lead item than a recent speech by Mrs Gandhi ("The Prime Minister has called for. . .").

But because the biases of the government media and the shoddy quality of their output are taken for granted, they must not be easily forgiven. It is easy to dismiss AIR, Doordarshan and FD as typically inefficient government departments. The point is that they are not merely government departments at all. Insofar as they are supposed to provide education and entertainment, they must be judged by journalistic values. They are also repositories of public trust. (Despite the perceptions of bias, the poll shows that 34 per cent still 'fully believe' AIR news and only seven per cent 'never believe' what they hear.) No other government departments have this kind of hold over the minds of people.

AIR's own audience research surveys also yield some frightening figures. According to a survey carried out near Bombay, as many as 47.4 per cent of respondents listened to rural programmes as against 89.1 per cent who listened to Vividh Bharati. Even allowing for AIR's self-congratulatory exaggeration, the 47.4 per cent is a significant number. The Imprint-PATHFINDERS poll also shows that though they realise that the government-run media are biased, people still pay them attention—often because there are no alternatives to them.

AIR controls the minds of the people.

The bureaucrats listen to their master's voices.

DEBATES ON THE ROLE OF broadcasting media in India often miss out one significant point. Generally, the opposition accuses the media of favouring the ruling party and the debate takes on a party political colour. The point is that AIR, Doordarshan and FD are not really committed to any political party at all. They merely follow the bidding of their rulers—whatever party they may belong to. AIR and Doordarshan were as deferential to the Janata regime as they had been to the Congress for three decades. The 25,000 men and women who help churn out thousands of radio and TV programmes, documentaries and newsreels are not members of any one party and share no ideological alignment. They are only bureaucrats who have learned to listen to their masters' voices. It is better to bend, than to lose their jobs.

(continued on page 21)

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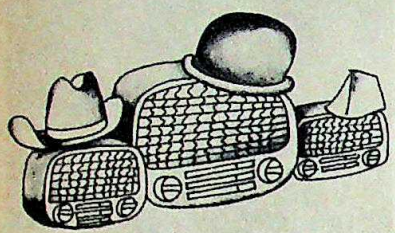
IMPRINT—PATHFINDER'S POLL

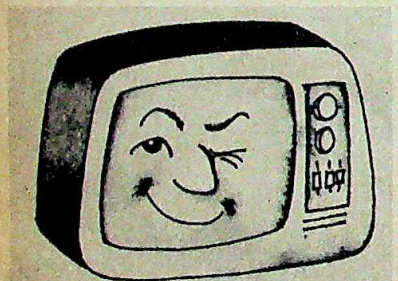
DO YOU BELIEVE THE NEWS AIRED BY AIR/VOA/BBC?



The BBC has the highest credibility of all three radio services.

	AIR	VOA	BBC
FULLY BELIEVE	34	20	57
PARTLY BELIEVE	58	42	30
DO NOT BELIEVE	7	4	1
CAN'T SAY	1	44	12

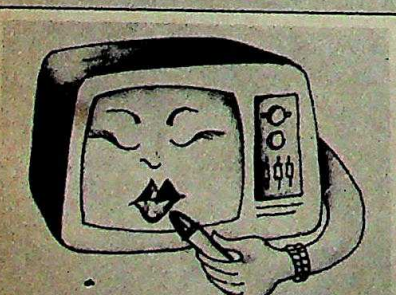
DO YOU BELIEVE THE NEWS ON TV?



The majority (56%) felt they could only partly believe TV news.

	All	Bom	Cal	Del	Mad
FULLY BELIEVE	40	35	35	46	45
PARTLY BELIEVE	56	57	63	49	54
DO NOT BELIEVE	4	8	2	5	1

SHOULD A SECOND PRIVATE SECTOR TV CHANNEL BE STARTED?



The overwhelming majority (90%) wanted a privately-run TV channel.

	All	Bom	Cal	Del	Mad
YES	90	86	88	98	88
NO	8	11	10	2	10
CAN'T SAY	2	3	2	—	2

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The Constitution is strangely silent on the role of broadcasting.

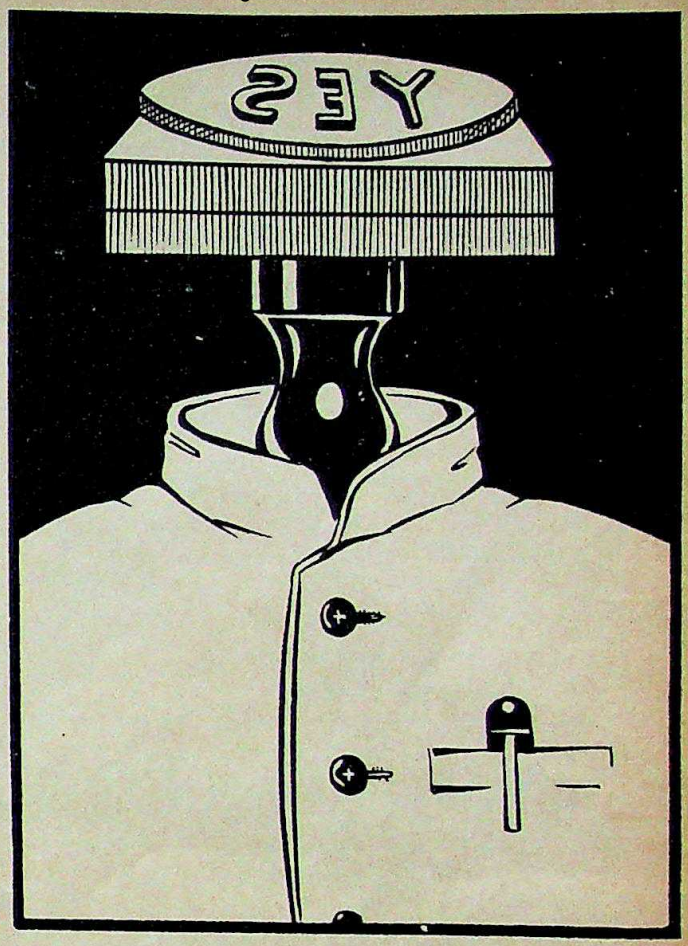
Such is the structure of broadcasting in this country that the men who run the media have no choice but to go along with the dictates of cynical politicans if they want to get along in their careers. At least part of the problem stems from the Constitutional approach to broadcasting.

The Indian Constitution, despite being the longest in the world, is strangely silent about the limits, duties, role and organisation of broadcasting, though it spends sections detailing the functions of the Election Commission, the Union Public Service Commission and the like. In fact, broadcasting gets only one mention: List I of the Seventh Schedule makes it clear that it is under the exclusive control of the Union Government.

This indifference to broadcasting is astonishing when you consider how much trouble is taken to protect broadcasting organisations from political interference in the rest of the free world. While several countries such as the United States and Brazil have privately-owned radio and TV stations, even those with government-owned broadcasting networks allow them virtually unchecked autonomy and freedom of expression. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation is independent of any government organisation and answerable only to Parliament; Swedish radio is protected by a legally enforceable act of Parliament; Japan's NHK broadcasting network has jurisdictional protection from political authority; and the British Broadcasting Corporation (whose credibility in India far outstrips AIR according to our poll), enjoys functional autonomy. During last year's Falkland War, the BBC presented a factual account of events and refused to contribute to the building up of patriotic fervour at the cost of its objectivity, despite rebukes from the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher.

The absence of any Constitutional safeguards for Indian broadcasting can perhaps be attributed to the then widespread assumption, that an autonomous broadcasting corporation would inevitably be founded. In 1948, Jawaharlal Nehru said: "We should approximate as far as possible, the British model." Appointment letters issued to AIR officials in the years just after Independence, included a clause stating that they were liable to be transferred anywhere in India when a new BBC-style corporation came into being.

The BBC enjoys functional autonomy.



Thirty years later, such a corporation is nowhere on the horizon. As things stand now, the Director General of All India Radio is directly responsible to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. It is the Ministry that appoints him and it can transfer him at will. He is entitled to no parliamentary protection, no special laws safeguard his autonomy or even his job and the Minister remains his boss. If the Ministry's instructions are unreasonable—during the Emergency, AIR was asked to stop playing Kishore Kumar's songs because he had not attended a Youth Congress function—he still has no alternative but to obey them.

Mrs Gandhi is determined to destroy her father's dreams.

THIRTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, Jawaharlal Nehru spoke of an autonomous broadcasting organisation. Today his daughter seems determined to see that his dream never comes true. Mrs Gandhi's attitude to the broadcasting media is best summarised by a statement she made to AIR station directors during an Emergency meeting:

"AIR is a government organ; it is

(continued on page 23)

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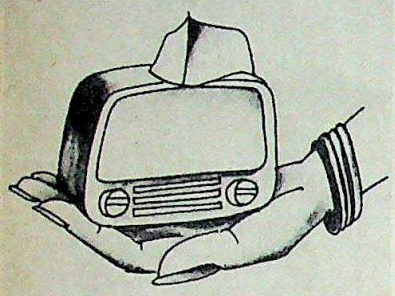
IMPRINT—PATHFINDER'S POLL

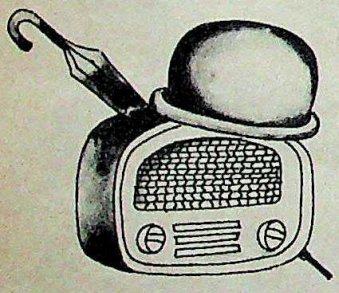
HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE QUALITY OF PROGRAMMES ON TV?



A majority (57%) were either ambivalent or critical while 43% were appreciative.

	All	Bom	Cal	Del	Mad
VERY GOOD	8	4	11	8	13
GOOD	35	25	35	31	55
FAIR	35	42	34	36	55
BAD/VERY BAD	22	29	20	25	6

HOW WOULD YOU RATE PROGRAMMES ON AIR/VOA/BBC?



A staggering 83% praised the quality of the BBC's programming.

	AIR	VOA	BBC
VERY GOOD	12	12	41
GOOD	47	38	42
FAIR	34	29	9
BAD/VERY BAD	6	1	—

HOW INFORMATIVE DO YOU FIND FD DOCUMENTARIES?

A majority felt that documentaries were informative.

	All	Bom	Cal	Del	Mad
EXTREMELY	14	15	13	22	7
VERY	50	43	57	59	46
QUITE	28	33	26	9	41
NOT AT ALL	7	8	10	4	6

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After the Emergency hard-sell, a soft-sell.

going to remain a government organ. We are proud that it is a government organ. There should be no doubt about all this."

To be fair, Mrs Gandhi no longer makes statements like these. Now, the media are still instruments of partisan politicking but the hard-sell of the Emergency has given way to a less jarring soft-sell.

There seems to have been a realisation that too much propaganda can be self-defeating. During the Emergency, the openly partisan roles of Doordarshan, Films Division and AIR caused the three media to become the most obvious and hated symbols of one-party authoritarianism. That way, they actually helped defeat the Congress in the 1977 elections.

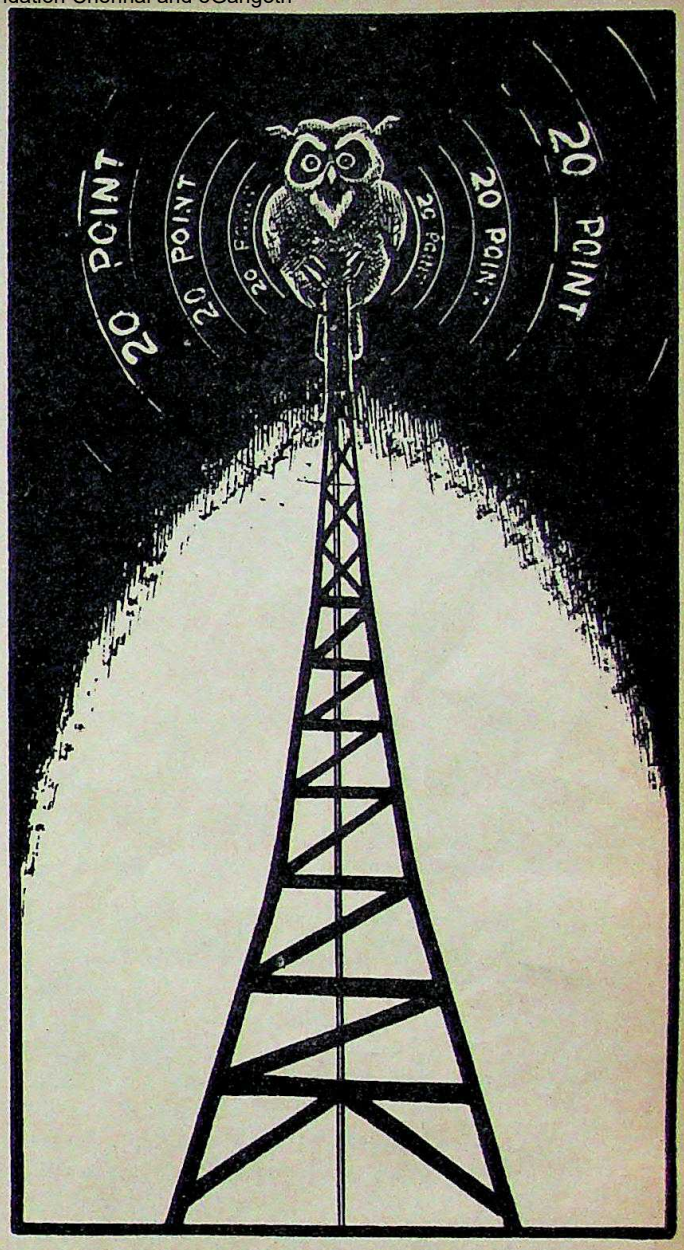
Moreover, as the privately-owned print media have become more daring, venturing into investigative journalism with exposés of the Bhagalpur blindings, the Nellie massacre and Antulay's trusts, any effort by government media to spew Emergency-style propaganda would face a serious credibility problem. So, with a degree of sophistication that its critics are not prepared to grant them, the government media have shifted gear and tried a different tack.

While Rajiv Gandhi must still be the most publicised MP today, no attempt is made to thrust him on the country in the manner in which his late brother was. The news bulletins may still lead with Mrs Gandhi's speeches but the emphasis has shifted subtly away from personal glorification to a concentration on previously unheard of 'beneficiaries' of the newly recast Twenty Point Programme.

The Bombay station of All India Radio produces anywhere from 70 to 80 programmes (in eight languages) on the Twenty Point Programme each month. But now 'human interest' is the key. The programmes all focus on how the lives of individuals have been substantially improved by the Twenty Point Programme. Says S Krishnan, Director of AIR, Bombay: "We have rarely even mentioned the phrase 'Twenty Point' in these broadcasts."

Human interest is the key to propaganda.

He is following the official line. Every AIR and Doordarshan centre in the country has received an official circular (reportedly emanating from the 'highest quarter') instructing it to project the Twenty Point Programme. A high level decision seems to have been taken to sell the Programme



without the personal sycophancy that gave the game away in the past.

So-called Twenty Point 'beneficiaries' are selected.

This new strategy is well coordinated. In Maharashtra, for example, officials of Doordarshan, FD, AIR and the Press Information Bureau (PIB) meet with state government publicity officials each month: their task is to select 'beneficiaries' of the Twenty Point Programme. Once they are chosen, these individuals are relentlessly projected by the government media and their 'good luck' stories are repeated *ad nauseum*.

The Bombay Doordarshan centre alone has produced an average of 15 to 20 items each month (some of which then turn up on news bulletins) on the Twenty Point Programme and its carefully selected 'beneficiaries'. Moreover, FD and state government documentaries on the same theme are also

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The tax-payer pays for Congress (I) propaganda.

regularly transmitted. As the General Election approaches, the frequency of such transmissions will, it is said, increase. Station Director, AS Tatari, does not refute talk of an increase. "We may increase the programmes in the coming months," he agrees. "At any rate, there is no chance of a decrease."

While some officials such as AIR's Krishnan claim that the Twenty Point Programme is a government scheme and should not be seen in political party terms, there can be no denying that the Congress (I) will fight the next election on this supposedly non-partisan Twenty Point Programme. Thus the propaganda value of such broadcasting cannot be underestimated.

But so subtle is the soft-sell that to date, no opposition party has questioned the need for publicising a Programme, which even by government statistics, exists largely on paper. That the government publicity machine—paid for by the tax-payer—should be used to rustle up these cheerful Twenty Point 'beneficiaries', and to then project their sagas in appealing human interest terms is by the standards of free and fair broadcasting—pretty scandalous. The fact that it has gone unnoticed is dangerous, for it suggests that the propaganda machine is acquiring a sophistication that it has hitherto lacked.

There is still naked partisanship.

OF COURSE, AS ANYBODY with experience of the ham-fisted, heavy-handed propagandising of AIR and Doordarshan knows, the sophistication has to slip up somewhere.

In recent months, there have been enough instances of naked partisanship to suggest that not that much has changed. Some examples.

- Both AIR and Doordarshan completely blacked out news of the Nellie massacre. When Parliament debated Arun Shourie's article on May 2, 3 and 4, AIR and Doordarshan broadcast only the Home Minister's statement without explaining the context.
- Doordarshan made no mention of the Punjab *Rasta Roko* campaign on April 4, but nevertheless, carried the Home Minister's statement, the next day.
- AIR, Doordarshan and FD have yet to cover the Bhagalpur blindings, the corruption charges against Antulay or the 'encounter' killings.
- During the violent Assam election campaign, AIR would regularly broadcast that 'no untoward incident has been reported' while the next day's papers would be full of bloody clashes.
- During the Andhra campaign, AIR ignored NTR and reported only Mrs Gandhi's speeches.
- According to *The Hindu*, AIR's news bulletins during the Karnataka election contained 243 references to Mrs Gandhi during the 18-day campaign. At least 133 of these dealt exclusively with her campaign speeches. On the other hand, Morarji Desai and AB Vajpayee rated seven mentions each.
- During the Jammu and Kashmir election campaign, AIR regularly quoted obscure Congress (I) leaders accusing Dr Abdullah of rigging the elections. Then it misquoted Dr Abdullah himself. Later it quoted a National Conference leader, Maulvi Farooq's comment on this misquote: "He (Abdullah) should not have said so." According to Maulvi Farooq, he had actually prefaced his comment with the important rider—"If Dr Abdullah has indeed said so..." Subsequently, the National Conference refused to

Mrs Gandhi rules the news bulletins.

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make any poll broadcasts. Abdullah said that he was not interested in 'lending respectability to the two media (AIR and Doordarshan) and their lies'.

Some opposition politicians like former Information Minister, LK Advani, publicly criticised these instances of biased election reporting, but they did not force the Election Commission to take note. As the General Election approaches, this may prove to have been a mistake. It seems probable—given the experience of the Assembly elections—that Doordarshan and AIR will continue to be used to advance Congress (I) interests during the election campaign.

As the Election approaches, the danger increases.

TWO RECENT DEVELOPMENTS suggest that the government has recognized the power of television and plans to use Doordarshan to serve its propaganda ends.

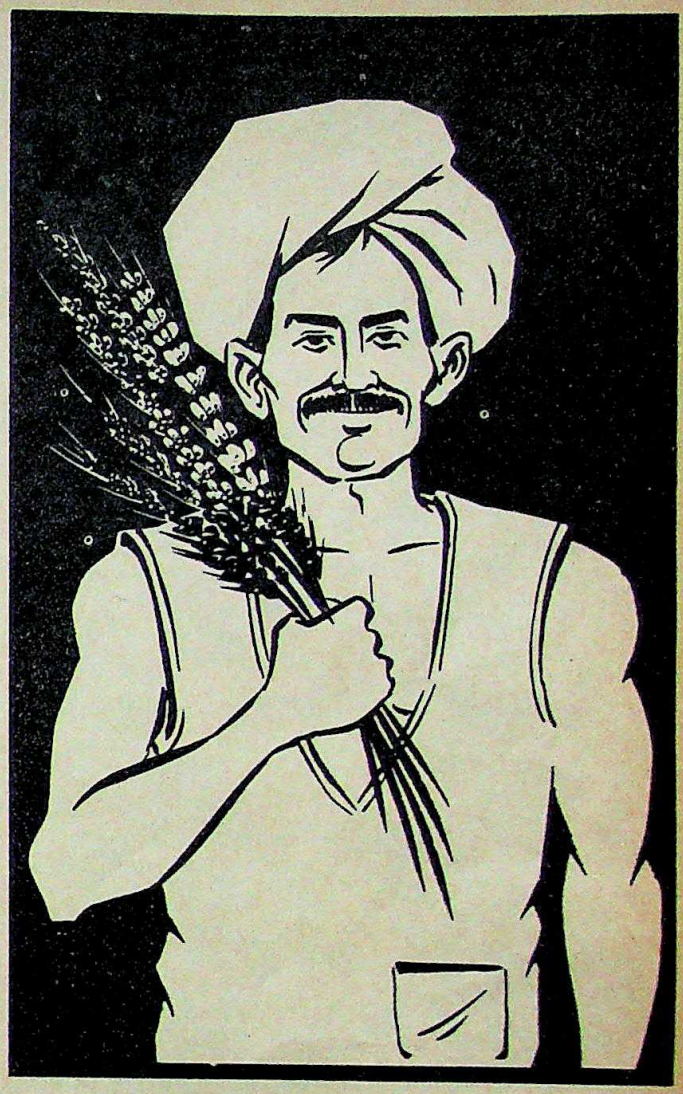
The first is the introduction of colour TV. When Vasant Sathe first announced that the government was determined to introduce colour transmissions, the scheme was criticised as being wasteful and unnecessary. Since then, the critics seem to have been appeased by the spectacle of World Cup cricket in colour and by the glamour of colour feature films; and the criticism has dried up.

This is a pity because the government has yet to produce any convincing explanation for the sudden introduction of colour TV. A working group appointed by the government itself has estimated that even in 1990, colour television sets will be so prohibitively expensive that the demand for them will be one-eighth of that for black-and-white sets. Moreover, the capital investment for colour TV production and transmission is at least 50 per cent higher than for black-and-white. To counter such figures, Sathe claimed that black-and-white TV was obsolete and hardly anybody anywhere in the world owned black-and-white sets. This is simply not true. There are 83 million colour sets in the US and 79 million black-and-white sets.

The case for colour TV is a sham.

When all this failed to appear convincing, the government fell back on the claim that it was making TV more attractive to the common man; that he would now be able to see his favourite educational programmes in colour. This claim is even more difficult to sustain.

There are only 200,000 TV sets in India and of them, less than three per cent are in the villages. The average TV owner earns Rs 750 a month and a third of all owners earn more than Rs 1,500 according to figures released by the Directorate General of Doordarshan. The statistics suggest that not too many 'common men' watch black-and-white TV. Fewer still are going to have access to colour sets.



Educational TV has yet to find an audience.

As for the claim that educational programmes will seem wonderful in colour, this too must be taken with a pinch of salt. According to a survey carried out by Ogilvy Benson and Mather, a leading advertising agency, the most popular TV programmes are film-based ones. *Chhaya Geet* has a viewership of 84 per cent while *Phool Khile Hai Gulshan Gulshan* has a viewership of 76.8 per cent. Doordarshan's own statistics show that such 'educational' and 'socially redeeming' programmes as *Hamare Kamgar*, *Hamare Udyog* and *Krishi Darshan* have a viewership of two to four per cent. The National Council for Educational Research and Training has found that

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Colour TV will be used for propaganda.

Delhi Doordarshan's school programmes have a viewership of only 38 per cent amongst all schools and have termed them 'a failure'.

So we have a situation in which the 'common man' can't even afford a black-and-white TV set, let alone the colour TV that is being introduced for his sake. And as for the educational and 'socially redeeming' programming that colour TV will help, the statistics show that the money spent on such programmes is wasted—hardly anybody watches them anyhow.

What then is the argument for investing so much in switching the network to colour rather than offering more subsidised TV sets and spending the money on better and more watchable programmes?

Media-watchers have an explanation. They point to a Doordarshan statistic that shows that newspaper readership in TV-owning homes is as high as 90 per cent. Clearly, TV viewers are the urban elite: one section of the country that Mrs Gandhi has not been able to reach with her docile AIR network. These are the people who read articles critical of her in the press and though they own TV sets, turn them on only to view sports events or films.

Subtle promotion of the regime is the key.

As no real attempt is being made to generate the kind of software or programming that will be required to work a genuinely 'educational' or 'informative' colour TV channel, it seems clear that the only colour programming available to Doordarshan in the coming years will be sports spectaculars, feature films and imported shows. And of course, the Twenty Point propaganda that the government media regularly churn out—in colour.

Consider the two spectaculars that colour TV has brought into the homes of the urban elite—the Asiad and the Non-Aligned Summit. Both have helped advance Mrs Gandhi's image among a traditionally sceptical audience. There is still a Commonwealth Conference to come and no doubt this too will strengthen the impression that she is a great world class leader.

On that basis alone, colour TV has given this regime what it has always lacked: an easy access into the homes of the urban elite. In doing this, Mrs Gandhi has followed the example of other leaders. Colour TV in Iran began with the coronation of the Shah and Idi Amin brought it to Uganda to coincide with the 1975 meeting of the Organisation of African Unity over which he presided. (Of course, it also came handy to televise his wedding.)

There is a second reason for believing that the government plans to use the power of television for its own ends.

ON JULY 5, HKL BHAGAT, THE Minister for Information and Broadcasting announced a massive expansion of the TV network after a meeting of State Information Ministers. The agenda for this meeting had only referred to a 'special plan' and the office note said it was still 'being considered'. Yet, at the end of the meeting, without having discussed the scheme with the State Ministers, without apparently having consulted the Planning Commission, Bhagat announced a Rs 68-crore expansion of the sort that has never before been attempted by any government anywhere in the world.

Bhagat was trying something fishy.

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He said that Doordarshan would build 13 more High Power Transmitters (HPT's) and as many as 112 Low Power Transmitters (LPT's) by the next year. As a result of this expansion, Doordarshan will reach a theoretical audience of 36 crores, plus another 12 crores who will receive weak signals.

Banana republics always misuse TV.

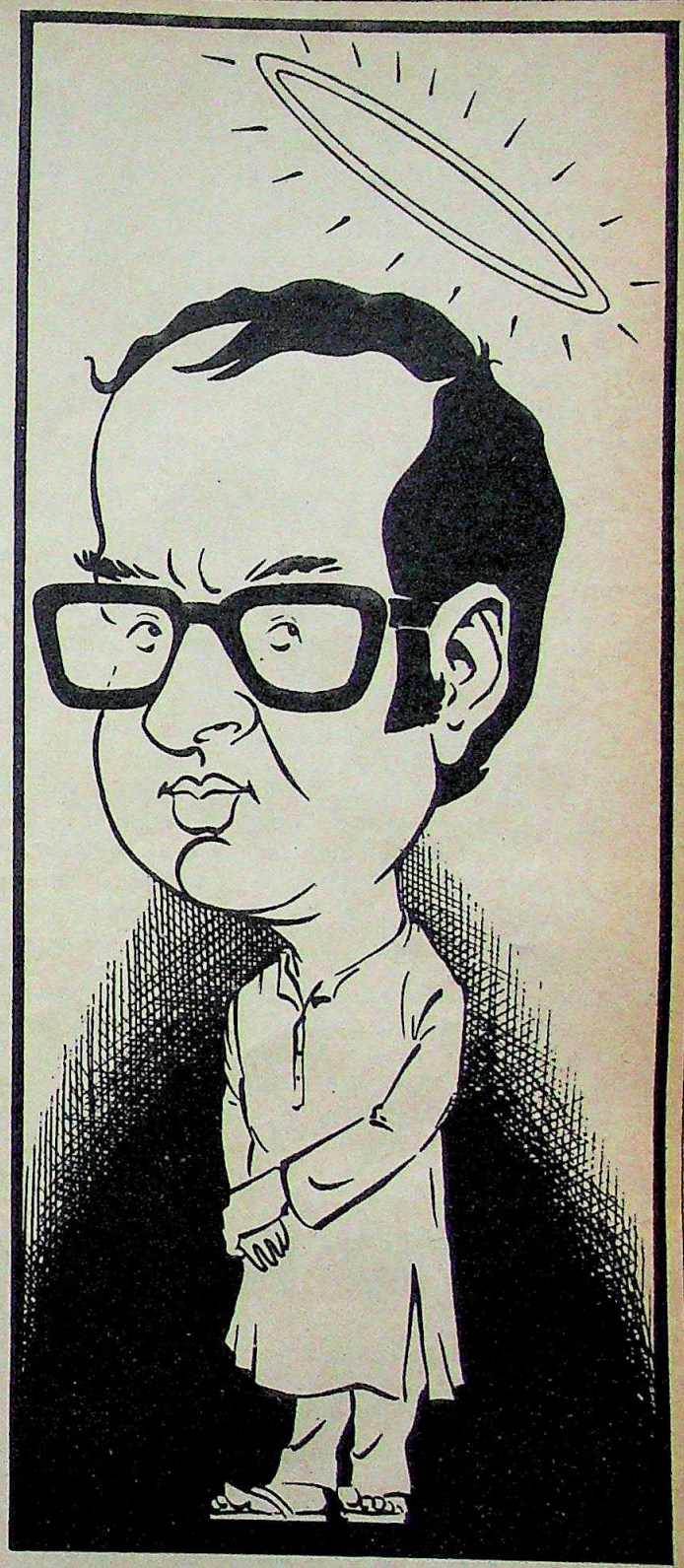
To add to the mystery surrounding the abrupt announcement of this scheme, Bhagat did not claim that free or subsidised sets would be offered to the poor people who comprise the major chunk of his hypothetical audience of 48 crores. Moreover, he did not say where exactly these new transmitters were to be installed and how; and indeed, it is widely believed that this is because he doesn't know himself. Further, no mention was made of how Doordarshan was going to provide the programmes to feed these new transmitters—and he plans to broadcast them from morning to midnight!

Given all these factors, some conclusions are irresistible. Firstly, the government doesn't really care about educational TV—this is why no attempt is being made to plan the programming. Secondly, it is quite happy if TV remains a means of getting to an urban elite. And thirdly, the new transmitters will only be used to broadcast the kind of popular light programming that is easily available and that elite audiences enjoy—so that subtle promotion of the regime and its leaders can be smuggled in.

There is also a strong suspicion that the urgency is because the expanded network is required for the next General Election. Referring to Bhagat's insistence that the expansion would go ahead at 'any cost', Iqbal Malik, a media-watcher and former Director General of AIR remarks: "There is no reason except for a political one. By the end of 1984, campaigning for the next General Election has to start and the process has to end by February or March 1985. By the end of 1984, even if 50 per cent of television coverage is achieved, the party's message can reach that much of the population—that is, if they possess television sets."

The expansion is unprecedented.

WHEN, AT THE NEXT GENeral Election, Mrs Gandhi smiles out of thousands of colour TV sets, the Opposition will make the usual noises about abuse of government media. It will claim that the party in power always has an unfair advantage. And it will be right.



Whether it has the right to complain, of course, is another matter. When the Janata Party came to power in 1977, images of the newly manufactured 'youth leader' Sanjay Gandhi and his mother, the fountain of all wisdom, were fresh in everyone's minds. By misusing the media so shamelessly during the Emergency, the Gandhis had provided convincing evidence that there was an urgent need to de-link

The 'youth' leader was newly manufactured.

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AIR and Doordarshan from the government.

Sure enough, the Janata Party included a commitment to autonomous broadcasting in its election manifesto and once it was elected, appointed a Commission under George Verghese (now the Editor of the *Indian Express*; then a former Editor of the *Hindustan Times*) to devise a just and apolitical broadcasting policy and structure.

The Verghese Commission came up with a scheme for 'Akashbharati', an autonomous public broadcasting system. But like the Congress government before it (the report of the Chanda Committee in 1964 also called for an autonomous broadcasting corporation and was ignored) the Janata regime rejected this recommendation. The Prasar Bharati Bill, it introduced in Parliament following Verghese's report, envisaged a very restricted kind of 'autonomy'.

Under this scheme, the broadcasting corporation would not be as independent as the Union Public Service Commission or the Judiciary. It would be no more autonomous than any other public sector corporation. Verghese denounced the bill as a 'farce'; the Janata party was trying to avoid giving up control of the media and yet, at the same time, trying to collar the credit for making the broadcasting services autonomous. Before the bill could be voted on, the Janata government fell.

In the 1979-80 election campaign, the Janata Party only made routine references to autonomy for AIR and Doordarshan, without even spelling out what such autonomy would entail. The Lok Dal manifesto contained a similar, vague promise and the Congress (I) did not mention broadcasting at all.

Now, the only times the government media get mentioned by political parties are when some of them feel hard done by. There is still no attempt to reopen the broadcasting debate, to tackle the fundamental issues and to try and formulate a long-term solution to the crisis of Indian broadcasting.

Incredible as this may sound, we have no legally enforceable broadcasting policy. This means that the Union Cabinet can interpret the role and organisation of broadcasting units any way it wants. It can open half a dozen TV centres in one state, and none in another; it can appoint or transfer programme staff with impunity; it can broadcast or withdraw any programme; and it can black out all opposition leaders and all criticism of the government.

This is a situation without parallel anywhere in the democratic world. In no free country do the people voluntarily give their rulers control of the most powerful means of communication and influence.

And yet, by not forcing a debate on the broadcasting structure, by not turning the government's stranglehold on the media into a political issue, this is exactly what we have done. Information Minister, HKL Bhagat, has promised to overcome all financial and technical constraints to push through his cynical plan for increasing the influence of government-controlled Doordarshan. Quite apart from the fact that a powerful medium of information and education is being wasted, there is also the question of how much we care for the truth—or whether we are prepared to see it perverted by a manipulated media.

Bhagat says his plans will be implemented by 1984. That year may be more significant than he realises. ♦

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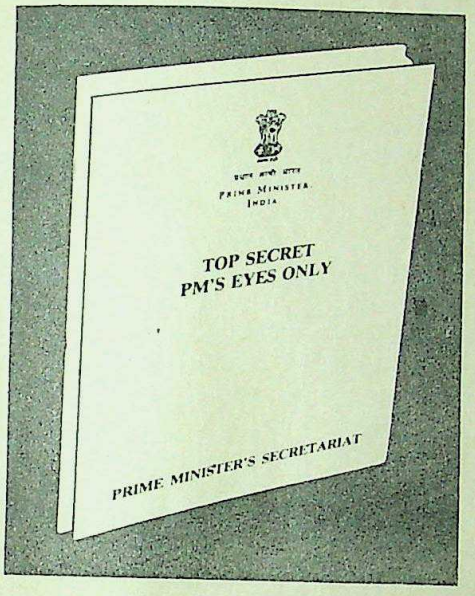
THE SAGA OF THE MORARJI PAPERS



How did* Imprint *get possession of the explosive correspondence between Morarji Desai and Sanjiva Reddy? Are any more shocks on the way? The full story of the behind-the-scenes drama.

WAS THERE A RUSSIAN inspired plot to bring down the Janata government? How close were George Fernandes' links with Socialist International and other West German interests? Was the raid on Mrs Gandhi's farm deliberately scuttled by officials who were still loyal to her? When Charan Singh called HN Bahuguna a KGB agent, did he have any evidence to back up this allegation?

These are questions that were repeatedly raised after the fall of the Janata government in 1979. Allegations, counter-allegations, rumour and innuendo filled the air. As politicians switched loyalties with a sadly predictable regularity and Mrs Gandhi returned to power, it began to seem that the truth would never emerge.

Late last year it seemed that there was a chance that at least some of the truth would come out. When he left the Prime Minister's office in 1979, Morarji Desai took along a sheaf of confidential files, letters and CBI reports. As Arun Gandhi explains, Morarji had originally intended to use these as source material for the last volume of his autobiography and later handed them over to Arun for a projected book on the Janata government.

At the time, Arun Gandhi was Editor of **Imprint** (he now edits *Who's Who In India* for our group) and we arranged that he could take leave for six weeks or so to work on the book. **Imprint** would retain the rights to print extracts and condensations and he could find a publisher for the hardcover and paperback editions.

As Arun began work on the book, we had an opportunity to examine some of the documents. What we saw, stunned us.

There was, first of all, a handwritten letter from Nani Palkhivala, then Ambassador to Washington. Palkhivala had just been visited by an official of the US State Department, he wrote. The official had assured him that the State Department had learned that the Russians had taken a top level decision to overthrow Morarji's government. Palkhivala was shocked; he was not sure what to do and was passing the information on in the hope that Morarji would know how to deal with this tip-off.

Such a letter, no matter how dramatic, contained what was at best an unsubstantiated allegation. But as Arun was able to show, there was circumstantial evidence to support the claim. Bahuguna and Charan Singh had always hated each other: the files were full of the abuse they traded. But, when it came to toppling the Janata, Bahuguna forgot his past hostility and joined Charan Singh in pushing Morarji out.

George Fernandes' role was even murkier. The files were full of allegations that Socialist International had paid his wife's expenses in 1976, while she was in Europe; that his links with Siemens would not bear close scrutiny; that his tenure at the Industries Ministry had seen houses like Modis receive favours; that his loyalties were far from clear. One Intelligence report warned that he would take a large number of MP's with him and topple the government.

Among Morarji's papers was the famous Charan Singh letter abusing Bahuguna. Along with the usual allegations ('He is a Natwarlal', 'he organised a *havan* against me' etc) there was a reference to Bahuguna's so-called KGB links which, Charan Singh insisted, had been noted by Mrs Gandhi's govern-

(continued on page 31)

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"THE PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO KNOW"

A personal view of the writing of the Morarji Papers.

WHEN MORARJI DESAI resigned from the Prime Ministership in July, 1979, he came to Bombay with several declassified files of his correspondence with his Janata colleagues and the President of India in the hope that someday he would be able to write the fifth volume of his biography pertaining to the 1977 period onwards. In fact he did start writing the book and stopped after a few pages when he realised he would have to sit in judgement over his colleagues and this would be embarrassing.

His friends however believed that the people of India had a right to know what really went wrong with the Janata experiment and persuaded him to make the source material available to someone else who would be impartial. It was fortuitous that around this time I met Mr Desai to interview him for a magazine article which helped to make him aware of my existence.

He asked me whether I would like to write this book and I couldn't believe my ears. Would I? Of course, I would. Thus I found myself in possession of around 200 files belonging to Mr Desai which contained explosive material about the Janata Rule.

At this stage, I was faced with a dilemma. Some of the letters were marked 'Secret and Confidential'. Would my using them constitute an infringement of the Official Secret's Act? I thought about it for many days and then consulted Nani Palkhivala who told me that there is no clear cut definition of the Act and that if I do get prosecuted it would be a test case.

I concluded that there was nothing in the letters which could be termed as 'Official Secret' and that the people of India had the right to know what went on behind the scenes in Delhi to eventually bring down a constitutionally elected government.

There was no doubt in my mind that Morarji Desai had shown exceptional courage in making this important source material available to me which has so far not been done by any other politician in India. The responsibility was tremendous. While I had to be careful not to betray Mr Desai's trust in me I had also to contend with my responsibilities to the people. In a democratic state the people not only have a right to know how the government is performing but also how their elected representatives are behaving. The correspondence brought this out very clearly.

With such interesting material at my disposal it seemed to me that I would be cheating the reader by attributing things and events to hearsay, rumours, unidentified sources or the omniscient reliable sources. Such books are written all the time and there was no point in adding one more to the plethora.

I decided the best way to deal with the subject to make it authentic was to quote the important letters, give the version of both the parties wherever possible and let the reader decide who was right and who wrong.

I believe too much of unnecessary secrecy shrouds our politics which is why we in India do not know anything about what goes on in the corridors of power. For instance, we know there was a disagreement between Dr Rajendra Prasad, the then President of India and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister, but even after so many years, secrecy envelops the issue and people are left to arrive at their own conclusions through conjectures and rumours.

The same goes with the last chapter of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's biography. This was marked 'Secret' and placed in the shelves of the National Archives in New Delhi to be published, if I remember correctly, 15 years after Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's death. However, everyone appears to have forgotten about this, including the people of India and that important chapter of Indian history may well be lost forever. This business of secrecy, to my mind, is going a bit too far.

Mr Desai's serious differences with the former President Reddy too would have remained secret but for the fortitude shown by Mr Desai. We must expect people elected to high places to behave with dignity and decorum and if they don't it should be incumbent upon colleagues to expose them. Political chicanery and machinations cannot be allowed to vitiate the atmosphere. This country is ours, we are proud of it and we must have the desire to build it upon firm foundations.

During the writing of the book, Mr Desai had been very cooperative. He gave me several hours of taped interviews to provide the links and the background and since then he has scrutinised the book three times but he has not agreed with the presentation, because he apparently cannot persuade himself to believe that the use of confidential letters is not a serious infringement of the Official Secrets Act. Official secrets have often been leaked out—to wit, the Kuo Oil Deal—but the government has not taken a serious view of these infringements. But, that is another matter.

The actual writing of the book was done in the most trying circumstances which has left me with a seriously impaired right eye. The romance of congenial and comfortable seclusion in Mahabaleshwar or Matheran was a mere illusion for me. In fact, my writing stint coincided with renovations in my modest 350 sq ft apartment so that I couldn't even be in the familiar surroundings of home.

It was through Mr Vijay Merchant's magnanimity that I was permitted the use of an apartment that had not been lived in for months. It was laden with dust and cobwebs; a rickety wooden table and a hard straight-back chair were all the comforts I could enjoy.

There was literally an ocean of material scattered on the grimy floor with me on my haunches trying to

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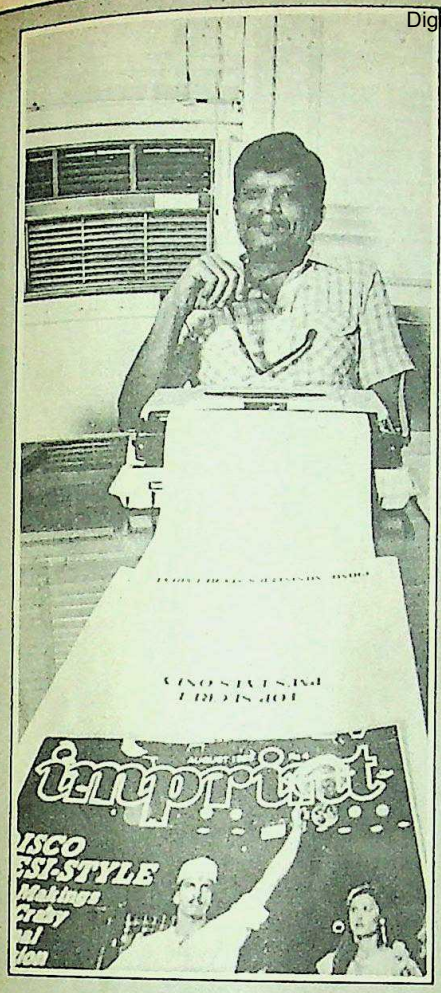

Arun Gandhi found circumstantial evidence to support the claim of a Russian plot. Bahuguna's role and George Fernandes's foreign links were all highly suspect.

determine what to use, how to use it and attempting to formulate a plan of action. It was evident that if I did not put a check on myself I would end up writing several volumes. Clearly, this was not feasible.

The publishers were anxious to keep the book within the affordable range of the common man which meant it should not exceed 300 to 350 printed pages. After classifying the material, personality-wise a picture began to emerge and my wife, Sunanda, who acted as my secretary, hastily jotted down the outline as I defined it.

What emerged was a frightening saga of intrigue and ineptitude. The most shocking was the game played by the President himself, an inkling of which was given in the excerpts printed in last month's issue of this magazine. Madhu Limaye harangued Morarji Desai with long and bitter letters almost every week on the RSS issue and Morarji patiently and painstakingly answered all the charges and misconceptions.

There were scores of letters between Morarji and Jayaprakash Narayan in which Jayaprakash was trying to exert his influence on the Prime Minister. These reveal the time when Karunanidhi went to Jayaprakash crying about the CBI harassment to which he had been subjected 'unfairly', according to him, by the Congress Government and Jayaprakash writing to Morarji to look into the matter.

Charan Singh dominated the scene with his vituperative charges against many of his colleagues especially HN Bahuguna and the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid. The Imam and Bahuguna set themselves up as the self-appointed guardians of the Muslims in the country and badgered Morarji with complaints that not enough was being done to protect them.

The inimitable Shibbanlal Saxena, the MP who according to Morarji Desai spent most of his time and energy digging into the past of cabinet members and bringing into light sordid facts including the roles played by Jagjivan Ram, Raj Narain, Kalpanath Rai and dozens of others.

Through all this, Morarji emerged quite unexpectedly, as a man with immense patience. I marvelled at his ability to keep cool and composed while all around him there was chaos and confusion. To me at least all this threw a new light on that period of Indian history and I hope I am able to convey it in good measure and convincingly to the reader.

The publication of the first extract of the first chapter of my book has created a sensation much beyond my expectations. It is good to know that the nation is alive and the people eager for the truth and I am sure Morarji Desai will be the last person to suppress it.

— *Arun Gandhi*

(continued from page 29)

ment. But Charan Singh provided no evidence at all and Bahuguna asked in his reply, whether Singh regarded Mrs Gandhi's 'belief' that he was a KGB agent as sufficient evidence.

It was a messy story that emerged. But there were some striking coincidences. George Fernandes had defended the government in a no-confidence motion and had then, mysteriously changed sides a day later. Bahuguna had helped topple the ministry and had then joined Mrs Gandhi. Was there a conspiracy? Were these people acting on orders from elsewhere?

When Arun later put the hypothesis to Morarji Desai, he dismissed talk of a Russian conspiracy, but the circumstantial evidence remains and is reproduced in the book.

There were also files relating to CBI investigations into the activities of Janata ministers. There were so many allegations against Nandini Satpathy that it was difficult to count them all. Also included in one file was the diary of Nandini Satpathy's son, a teenage youth who was only interested in drink and women. Nevertheless, the manner in which police officials indulged the boy and even loaned him a revolver, made startling reading.

The files relating to the raid on Mrs Gandhi's farmhouse at Mehrauli and the collection of Congress Party funds during the Emergency had already been published by Arun Shourie and formed perhaps the tamest of the disclosures. It was well-known that the Home Ministry had delayed the raid and that any incriminating evidence had long been removed by the time the raid took place. Less well-known was that CBI Director, V Nagarkar had finally written a pathetic note in Marathi begging the government to take action. The Congress funds disclosures were relatively minor. The sums involved were rarely more than a few lakhs—peanuts by the standards of election expenditure and the allegation about the Jeep-Apeejay deal had already been thrown out by the Courts.

The same was true of the charges against Kanti Desai. Hundreds of sheets of paper had been expended on detailing the younger Desai's alleged gambling losses, his sponsorship of Balasubramaniam, his role in allowing the import of synthetic fibres and the like. But then, the Vaidyalingam Commission had already investigated these charges and found that most could not

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GANDHI VS. GANDHI ?

On more and more issues today, Mrs. Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi appear to be divided. Are they falling out? Or are they hand-in-glove in their clever camouflage which, by encouraging opposing views and engendering controversies, gives the Prime Minister more time and room to manoeuvre. So she can weigh several options before deciding on a course of action in resolving national issues? Judge for yourself.

The Sunday Observer discusses and debates vital issues — Sunday after Sunday. So you can take your own stand. For or against.

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The famous Sanjiva Reddy letter in which he made allegations against Kanti Desai, was in fact, unclassified. Morarji had complained that Sanjiva had failed to mark the letter secret.

be substantiated.

We were aware—as was Arun—that CBI reports, letters in the original and 'secret' papers all appear impressive to laymen and that any allegations contained in such documents acquire a new legitimacy—even though they are, in themselves, no proof of guilt.

When we read the manuscript of the book that finally emerged (Arun's account of the writing appears elsewhere) we decided to ignore the mud-slinging and personal rivalries that seemed to have dominated the Janata government. Instead, we would concentrate on one of two substantive issues: either the role played by Russia in the collapse of the government or the clash between President Sanjiva Reddy and Prime Minister Morarji Desai.

Of the two, the KGB-plot hypothesis was at worst unsubstantiated and at best, circumstantial. On the other hand, the Morarji-Sanjiva correspondence did raise several vital issues (which were later amplified by Girilal Jain in *The Times of India* on August 24, 1983) that needed to be clarified. What should the role of the President be? Was Reddy overstepping his authority? And did his personal animosity towards Desai explain his extraordinary behaviour when the government fell?

We decided that this was probably the book's most significant chapter. But there was another important issue: what about the Official Secrets Act? Even if it was Morarji who had contravened the provisions of the Act by keeping the documents, was it right for us to print secret correspondence?

Finally, the issue resolved itself quite easily. The famous Sanjiva Reddy letter, in which he made allegations against Kanti Desai, was in fact, unclassified. In his reply to Reddy, Morarji had complained that Sanjiva had failed to mark the letter 'secret'. So the question was only about the other three letters we printed—asking Morarji to submit lists of his supporters and then finally, informing him that he was no longer Prime Minister of India. The contents of all three letters were well-known. After Charan Singh formed his short-lived ministry, various Janata leaders had already presented their account of Reddy's actions, referring to his demands for lists of MP's. They were also important historical documents, dealing with the collapse of the Janata government.

Moreover, secret correspondence has appeared in print before: Arun Shourie does this all the time. Finally we considered the spirit of the Act: were we divulging state secrets? Could any foreign power benefit from these disclosures? Nani Palkhivala had already told Arun that the Act was open to interpretation.

In the light of all this, we decided to go ahead. The interest the article has aroused, the discussions in Parliament and the wide publicity the disclosures have received, suggest that we acted in the public interest. It will be a shame if the rest of the book is prevented from appearing.

— *Vir Sanghvi*

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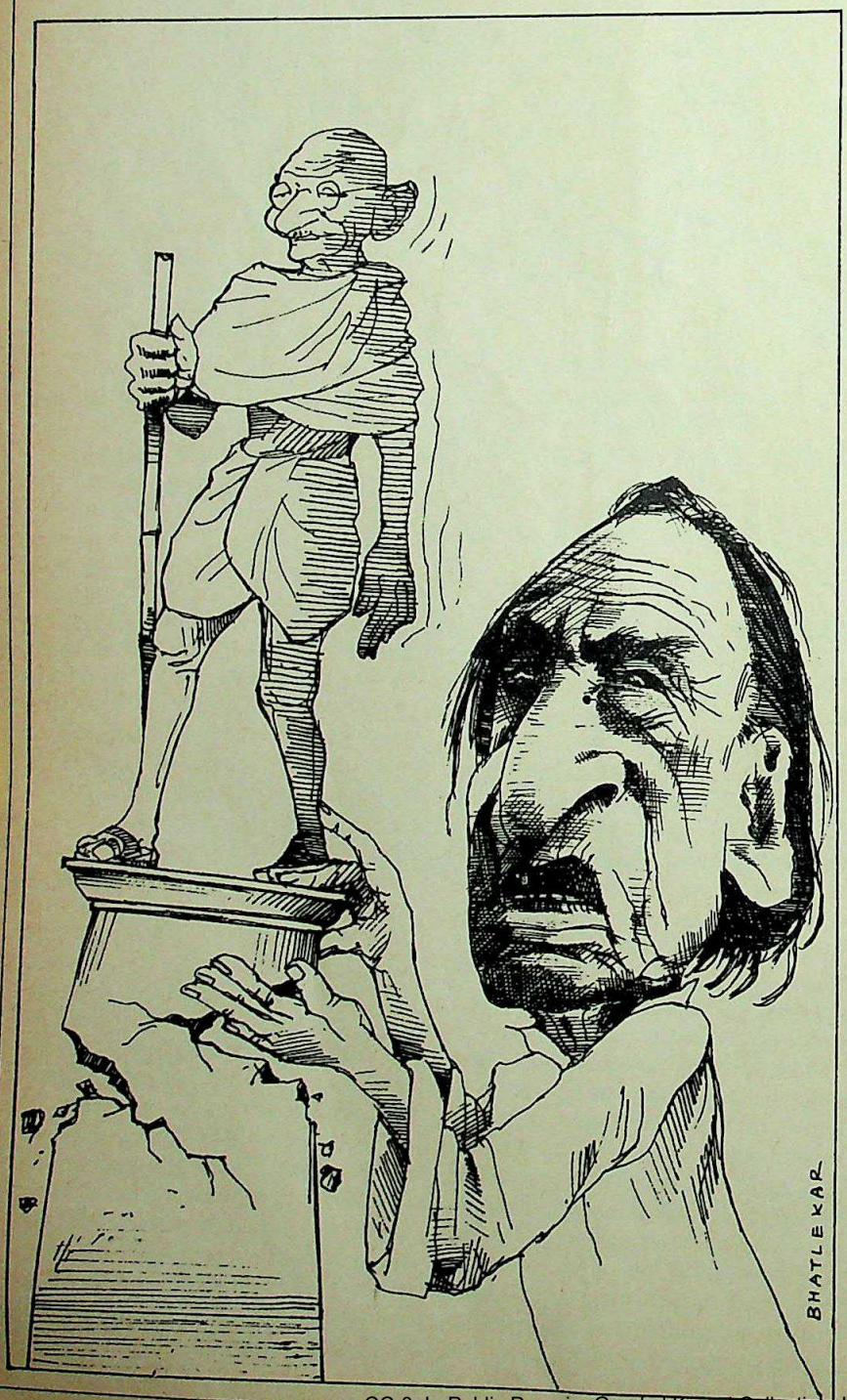
GANDHI DEFENDED

Following our reprint of Arthur Koestler's attack on Mahatma Gandhi, we also reprint JB Kriplani's rebuttal.



I DO NOT BLAME ARTHUR Koestler for his misunderstanding of Gandhi's basic thought. There are obvious difficulties, unless one tries to understand it in its spirit and in its comprehensiveness. This becomes more difficult in the case of a person, whose knowledge of India and the conditions under which Indians lived under British imperial domination is not adequate. I am afraid Koestler believes in the benevolent character of British imperialism or at least he thinks that it was not as bad as that of other countries, capitalist, fascist or communist. This is natural for one who had to suffer under the barbaric tyranny of Hitler.

Gandhi was not a theoretician or an intellectual in the academic sense of the term. He did not work in libraries and museums to study the literature on the subject he treated. He placed the idea of home-spun and home-woven cloth before the nation to provide work for the unemployed and the semi-employed in the villages of India.

However, he did not work out all the implications of decentralised industry in economic terms of production, distribution, exchange and consumption of goods and services, etc. He did not discuss it from the point of view of the theory of value. He merely kept before the nation what he thought would be a suitable occupation for the agriculturist in India, who had leisure at least for three months in the year, when agricultural operations were not possible. He had to be provided work for these months. It had to be provided in his home or village. It had to be whole-time work which would give him the customary wages in the village or part-time work which would enable him to supplement his meagre income from agriculture.

Gandhi knew that the Swadeshi

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movement of using cloth manufactured in India, consequent to the Bengal partition agitation had failed, because the politicians relied on Indian mill-agents for its supply. No effort was made to increase the production. He, therefore, did not rely upon the textile mill-agents but wanted the villagers to produce their own cloth for use or for the market.

There is yet another difficulty in understanding Gandhi, created by the language he used. It was not the language of the learned or the sophisticated, but that of the market place and of the common people. For instance, he called the Supreme Deity by the name of Ram, a semi-mythical and semi-historical person, considered by the Hindus as the incarnation of God. This was the name used for him by millions of his countrymen. Gandhi, like other reformers of old, did not want to shake the faith by which the common people lived. He, however, took care to state that the Ram of his conception was not the husband of Sita or the son of Dashrath, but 'the One who resides in every human heart and pervades the universe!' Again, he called as 'sin' every activity that he considered as harmful to the nation. The practise of untouchability was a sin; wearing foreign cloth was a sin; going to the foreign educational institutions was a sin, etc. It was fortunate that in his view these sins were not mortal but venial, they altered with circumstances, and they became innocent or inevitable activities.

But this was not so in the eyes of his orthodox followers. I was living near Gandhi's *ashram* at Sabarmati. A saintly brother of mine was living with me. He did not wear khadi, the hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. I asked a senior member of the *ashram*. "Am I to take him to be a sinner because he does not wear hand-made cloth? His character in every way is superior to mine." The reply was, "We have to create this as a new sin." I said, "We have sins enough, why add to them?"

Like every reformer or inventor of a new idea, who wants to convert people, Gandhi often overstated its value. He sometimes stated it as constituting the core of his reform. He would say that in the *charkha*, the spinning wheel, lay *Swaraj*, independence of India. But on that account, he did not abandon his movement of resistance to foreign role or work for the removal of untouchability, or for communal unity etc. I once had a talk with him about an eminent personality in the freedom fight. Gandhi was praising him beyond measure. I asked him, "Bapu, does exaggeration not amount to untruth?" Quick came the reply, "But I believe in what I have said." I was taken aback. How could a man of his intelligence be unaware of the shortcomings of his co-workers. But this self-deception, *maya*, as the Hindus call it, often blinds the reformer to reality.

Gandhi in his last days recognised this fact when he said that he had been living in the illusion, that his countrymen had really accepted his concept of non-violence! Every prophet, reformer or revolutionary suffers from this illusion or *maya*, or else he would not be able to convert people and fulfil his mission.

To begin with, the author quotes what Sarojini said of Gandhi's poverty: "It takes a good deal of money to keep Bapu in poverty." The poetess had the freedom to make such a flippant remark as the writer himself says. But I have seen Gandhi living for years on food which would not cost more than a couple of pence per meal. After years, due to the condition of his health, the doctors prevailed upon him to take milk, as he would not take meat or eggs. He then took goat's milk. Goat is the least costly milch animal available in India. It could easily be procured wherever he went in India. He took a litre and a half of milk daily, with boiled vegetables and a couple of wafer-thin *chapatis*.

Gandhi only objected to the craze for 'labour saving' machinery.

None of his companions and followers took this kind of tasteless food. It is true that, as years passed by, and he came to be known as a Mahatma (the writer may not know) to his annoyance and great inconvenience, he had to travel constantly. He was accompanied by half a dozen or more persons needed for his work. Some of them had fanciful fads in diet which would be irksome to the host. But the ladies who served them did not mind the inconvenience. For them it was a loving service. By the way, it may interest Koestler to know that I never called Gandhi 'Mahatma', but Bapu or Gandhiji. Sarojini was perhaps referring to the expenditure of the party and not personally on Gandhi.

The writer has also talked of the special third class compartment the railway authorities reserved for him and his party, late in Gandhi's life. This was done not for his comfort or convenience but that of other passengers in the train. Large crowds collected at every station at all hours of the day and night. The ordinary passengers found it difficult to get in and out of the compartment, with their baggage. Trains could not keep to time. If the writer had any knowledge of India and the crowds that gathered to have the *darshan*, a look at this strange man, their leader, he would not have mentioned the special compartment reserved for him and his party. The compartment was attached to the end of the train.

Let us first take the question of Gandhi's advocacy of hand-made cloth and other cottage and village industries. The question should not be confused with whether such industrial production is modern, that is, whether it is produced through big machines, mills and factories. The question here is whether it provided remunerative work to our agriculturists and increased national production and wealth. The agriculturist had leisure hanging on his hands. He was consuming food. Whatever little he produced in his leisure time, would be so much wealth produced that would be useful to him and the nation. Thus Gandhi was merely trying to utilise the waste of the nation. He did not want people having whole-time remunerative jobs to leave these and to take to the spinning wheel or the loom.

When an Indian socialist asked him whether he was against the use of machinery and large-scale production, he said, "I never said that. The belief is one of the many superstitions about me .... Your question is based upon loose newspaper reports. What I am against is large-scale production of

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things villagers can produce without difficulty." Again, he says, "How can I be against machinery when I know that even this body is the most delicate machine .... What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is .... for 'labour saving' machinery. Men go on saving labour till thousands are without work and thrown on open streets to die of starvation." Further, he says, "The supreme consideration is man. The machine should not make atrophied the limbs of man."

Also, he says, "I do visualise electricity, ship-building, iron-works, machine-making and the like existing side by side with village crafts. But the order of precedence will be reversed. Hitherto, industrialisation has been so planned as to destroy the villages and the village handicrafts. In the state of the future it will subserve the villages and their crafts. I do not believe as the socialists believe that the centralisation of the necessities of life will conduce to the common welfare, when centralised industries are planned and owned by the state."

Twenty-two years after Independence, when India has put up huge steel plants at enormous expense and suffered heavy losses, it has not been able to tackle the problem of unemployment. After the completion of every five-year plan, the backlog of unemployment has been on the increase. The real wages in the villages and work have diminished, according to official estimates. It is only now that the authorities have begun to talk of small-scale industries and agriculture. Even at this time, India will gain and not lose, by having an economy that is job-oriented.

Koestler criticises Gandhi for the burning of foreign cloth and quotes poet Rabindranath Tagore in this respect. He dismisses Gandhi's reply to the poet as irrelevant. There can be, of course, two opinions about the burning of foreign cloth. But supposing a person gives up the drink habit, what is he to do with a few bottles in his cellar? Is he to pass on what he considers bad for himself, to his neighbour who drinks? Nobody would doubt the answer to this question. Also, Gandhi did not want to pass on to the poor what had been rejected by the rich. It was the latter who were burning their costly clothes. They could well afford to give to the poor cheap new clothes if they so wished.

The writer has pointed out that the poet Rabindranath Tagore protested against the reason given by Gandhi for the great sufferings of the people of Bihar due to the terrible earthquake of 1934. Gandhi had said that the Biharis suffered this calamity for the sin of untouchability. This was interpreted as if Gandhi had said that the earthquake was caused by the sin of Biharis and not by geological causes. This was obviously not his meaning. A physical phenomena results in physical changes. But when it causes human suffering, it is not uncommon for men to seek some psychological reason. The physical happening may only be the occasion of suffering. It could not be its efficient and real cause. Supposing one brick falls on another, one or both may break; but there is no suffering involved. Gandhi was, of course, wrong in assigning a particular psychological reason, the practice of untouchability, for the pain suffered by the Biharis occasioned by the earthquake.

Gandhi's ideas about disease and cure are stated in extreme terms.

Gandhi's ideas about disease and cure are stated in extreme terms which may appear absurd. But more and more are the practitioners of modern medicine accepting the idea that 'Prevention is better than cure'. How can this prevention be brought about except through regulation in food, drink, mode of acting and living, etc. It is also a fact that often people indulge in excess and then to avoid their evil consequences, they use countervailing drugs. Thus drugs become a kind of escape from the result of excesses.

The writer cannot understand how Gandhi made Jawaharlal his political heir in spite of differences in their outlook. Gandhi usually exaggerated the virtues of his co-workers and minimised the faults of his opponents (enemy he had none). He once called Rajagopalachari his 'political conscience', but nobody mentions that today. He gave the title of *Dinabandhu* (friend of the poor) to Andrews.

Gandhi knew that Jawaharlal did not agree with him on many matters, but he also knew that he, Jawaharlal, was a brave and fearless fighter. It was this fight that Jawaharlal was to carry on. Only in that sense Jawaharlal was to be his heir.

Moreover, Gandhi was not the Prime Minister of India to nominate Jawaharlal as his successor. Even if he were, he was too good a democrat to appoint a successor. Gandhi also said that though Jawaharlal disagreed with him in life, he would speak his language after his death. Whether Jawaharlal spoke Gandhi's language after his death, I leave it to others to judge.

The writer criticises Gandhi for the neglect of the education of his sons. He admitted the charge. But, considering the condition of India, Gandhi's sons, through their home education and their participation in the political struggle in South Africa and then in India had a much better education than they could have had under the lifeless and aimless system of education imposed on the country by the foreigners.

After all, with whatever education they had, did not one of the sons of Gandhi, Devadas, become the Managing Editor of the noted English daily, *The Hindustan Times*? Another edited a weekly in South Africa. I have never heard that Manilal was forced to live in South Africa as the writer says. He often came to India and could have remained here if he wanted. These two could not have edited papers in a foreign language without a good deal of education. Maybe they did not attend educational institutions. But, is education acquired only through schools, colleges and universities? Some of the greatest men in the world had no such education!

The eldest son wanted to be a barrister like Gandhi, whose earnings were used mostly for the service of the poor. If he did not consent to give his son an expensive education he can hardly be blamed. However, Harilal, after coming to India engaged himself in commerce and was doing well enough. But he ruined his business and his life by excessive drink. When out of his cups, like others addicted to drink, he was a likable person. Gandhi issued a

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statement declaring that he had nothing to do with his son. This was done as he was exploiting his name. Even so, Gandhi's friends did try to help him, whenever he was in trouble. The children of the great have many advantages. They also have to suffer from some handicaps.

In the opinion of the writer, Gandhi's success was due to the fact that the British methods of repressing their opponents were less cruel than, those of the nazis, fascists and the communists. It is true that the British had not invented 'death chambers'.

Nevertheless, the violent revolutionaries in the Indian national movement for freedom were put down by the British authorities here with all the cruelty that was in vogue then. Those accused of political crimes were tortured to confess to crimes they had not committed. They were also through torture made to incriminate those whom the police wanted them to. Not only those convicted, but those who had committed no overt act but were merely suspects were severely punished.

Some people were convicted to seven years rigorous imprisonment for merely shouting *Bande Mataram* – salutation to Mother. Some prisoners accused of political crimes or even suspects were sent to Andamans, an island in the Indian ocean more than a thousand miles from the mainland. There they had to live a life no better than that described by Mr Koestler himself in his book *Darkness at Noon*. Many of them never returned.

It would appear that Koestler had never heard of the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre in Amritsar.

Koestler's views in respect of the tyranny of British rule in India are coloured by the assumption that the freedom-loving British, with democratic traditions, were ruling India. This is not a fact. India was being governed by British bureaucrats, 'the men on the spot'. They came for a few years and went back. When not amassing wealth, they covered themselves with the glory of having laboured to save the Empire at great personal sacrifice. They were not allowed to settle in India. They were conditioned to consider the Indian people as an inferior and degenerate race.

Indian food, dress, manners, etc were inferior to those of the British. The Englishman would on the hottest day wear a suit of warm clothes, stiff collar and woollen socks! He would not come in contact with the Indians lest his strong character be adversely affected in association with a decadent people. No Englishman could marry an Indian woman. He despised the Indian way of life. He had contempt for those who stuck to the old Indian ways. He ridiculed those who slavishly copied his ways. No Englishman could commit a crime against an Indian. If he was found troublesome he was given a free passage home. If an Englishman murdered an Indian it was all accidental. Indians had such enlarged livers and spleens that a kick from an Englishman killed them.

The best of Indians were considered inferior to the Englishmen of doubtful character. British imperialism had degraded a whole race of men. They lived in constant fear in their own land. Fear is the greatest enemy of mankind.

To say that Gandhi was using Manu as a 'guinea pig' is absurd.

We have said earlier that the Indian nation suffered from fear. Gandhi, by his non-violent movement, took away this fear from the hearts of Indians. They were no more afraid, because they had nothing to conceal in a non-violent, open, rebellion. When charged with sedition they did not deny the charge and cheerfully marched to jail. Even urchins in the streets could shout at the Englishman's face that his government was 'satanic' and that it was their national *dharma*, duty, to resist and destroy it. May I submit to the writer that if Gandhi's movement did nothing else for India but only made Indians fearless, he would have worked a miracle in the life of the nation for which his countrymen would feel ever great friends.

The learned writer has touched on various other aspects of Gandhiji's life and teachings for his criticism. I cannot correct his misconceptions on all these. But I cannot leave untouched a topic which has confused not only the Westerners but many people in India, including some of Gandhi's close associates.

This is about his sex experiments in the last year of his life, carried on in Noakhali (Bengal). What Gandhi did is not something unknown in India. The perfect *Yogi*, the man of realisation, is one who even when 'his senses are moving in the objects of the senses' remains untouched and unaffected by them. In that attitude of mind was Arjuna asked by Sri Krishna in the *Geeta* to do his duty as a soldier without incurring sin.

The sex urge in man is the most primitive and the most powerful to subdue. It has come to us from the vegetable kingdom. This demand of the flesh is to be conquered by the aspiring soul. Hindu mythology tells of great *rishis* and saints falling prey to this primitive urge. Gandhi wanted to see if he was free from it.

To say that he was using a young lady as a 'guinea pig' is, I think, absurd.

Young Manu was old enough to refuse compliance. I don't think she ever felt sorry or ashamed of it in the years that followed. Koestler's pity for this 'guinea pig' is misplaced.

According to present-day psychology, as far as I know, absolute control of the sex urge, leads to pathological and psychological imbalance. This is perhaps natural. Those who in modern times try to suppress the sex urge generally do it in isolation. The Hindus believe that one cannot control this urge if one eats stimulating foods, reads sex literature, visits theatres and dramas where sex is the predominant note. Doing all these things, one can remain a bachelor but not a *brahmachari*. Also one may find it psychologically harmful.

However, I do not expect Koestler to appreciate the Hindu view of *Brahmacharya*. All that I would submit is that neither Western physiology, medicine, nor psychology has fathomed the depth and the ramifications of the sex urge and the means of its control as did the ancient seers, Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Christian. Only, they did not systematise their knowledge.

I must, however, agree with Koestler that there is a great deal more of hypocrisy among the Hindus than is good for them. ◆

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International Intelligence

A Monthly Look at the Events and Personalities Behind the News

BRIEFINGATE

Reagan And The Stolen Papers

Former US President Jimmy Carter.

NOBODY IN WASHINGton is quite sure whether the row over the purloined Carter briefing papers is going to fade away. Current speculation has it that Reagan has finally curtailed the fall-out from the disclosure that during the 1980 campaign, his aides stole Jimmy Carter's briefing papers. But then, that is what they said about Watergate in 1972 when Richard Nixon defeated George McGovern despite the initial bugging revelations.

Strangely enough, the story first 'broke' in 1980 itself. Its source was David Stockman, now Budget Director in the Reagan Cabinet—the Subramaniam Swamy of American politics; a man who cannot keep his mouth shut. Addressing an obscure club in the small Michigan town of Cassopolis he recounted how during rehearsals for the debate with Carter, he (Stockman) had played the part of Carter. He knew what Carter was going to say, he explained, because he had been shown a copy of a 'pilfered' Carter campaign document (a briefing book!). Stockman's stoutly Middle American audience loved the anecdote and a reporter from the local paper (*The Elkhart Truth*) printed it. Another local paper, *The Dowagiac News* reprinted the story but as its circulation is 3,700 nobody noticed it.

In 1981, Laurence Barrett, White House Correspondent for *Time* heard of the stolen briefing book and wrote about it. His editor spiked the story. Barrett tried again and the story was spiked a second time. Finally Barrett gave up, only referring to the pilferage in passing in his book on the first year of the Reagan administration.

POLITICAL ESPIONAGE

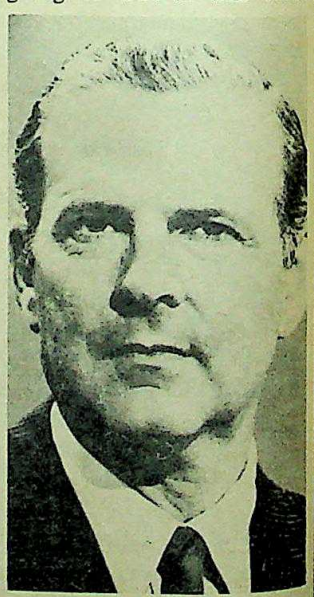
It was after the book appeared earlier this year, that the story began to take off. Disgruntled members of the Carter White House (including pollster Pat Cadell and former Press Secretary Jody Powell) drew attention to it and both the *New York Times* and *The Washington Post* prominently featured the 'disclosure'. An obscure Congressman Don Albosta began drawing parallels with Watergate and an unnamed collector of political memorabilia came forward to give *The Washington Post* some documents he had found in a dustbin outside the Reagan campaign headquarters in 1980. Among them was one that referred to a Reagan 'mole' in the Carter White House.

How serious is the 'revelation'? Many political observers believe that the purloining was no more than 'routine political espionage'. But there is a contrary view. The Carter-Reagan debate was crucial to the campaign. Carter came across as tense and asinine ("I asked my daughter Amy what the world's problems were. . .") while Reagan was cheerful and relaxed. Everytime Carter launched into an attack on a Reagan policy, the older man would chuckle, "Oh, there you go again!" *almost as though he knew in advance what Carter was going to say.*

If Reagan had prior knowledge of Carter's debating strategy, then the result of the debate was indeed, a foregone conclusion. And, considering how crucial the debate was to the campaign, the theft of the briefing book was no minor matter.

NEW DISCLOSURES

As the disclosures continue to emerge, more mud has stuck to the Reagan image. Was there really a mole in the Carter White House? Did Reagan always have advance knowledge of what the Carter camp was going to do? If this turns



James Baker.

out to have been the case, then there are troubling parallels with Watergate.

Also under fire is the role of Conservative columnist George Will, well-known to

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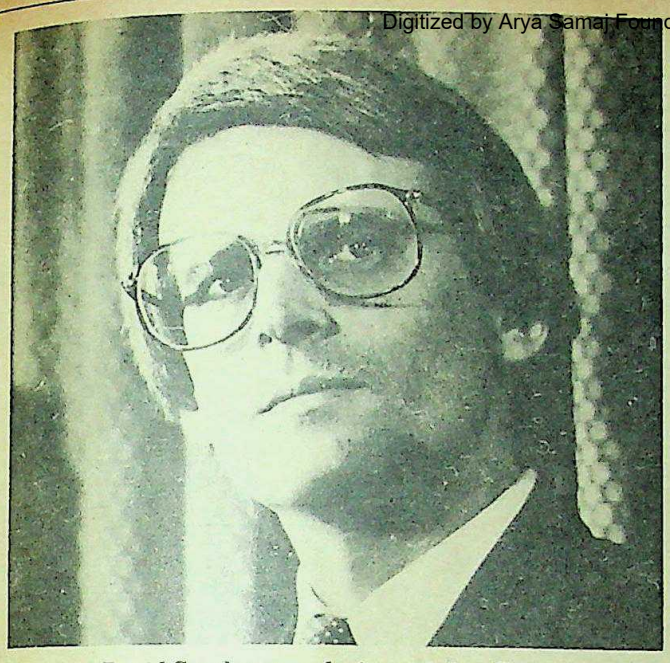


David Stockman : playing at being Carter.

Indian readers of the international edition of *Newsweek*. Will, it transpires, took part in the now notorious rehearsal for the debate (in which Stockman played Carter). He helped the former actor learn his lines and polished his performance for him. Yet, after the debate he appeared on a TV talk show where he made no mention of his role in Reagan's preparation and presumed to offer an 'objective commentary' on the debate. Predictably, Will thought that Reagan had been far superior to Carter.

Will has been criticized on two scores. If Will had participated in an exercise based on stolen documents, then his behaviour seems morally unsound. Moreover, was it not hypocritical of him to have played enthusiastic Reagan aide before the debate, and then switched to playing objective journalist afterwards?

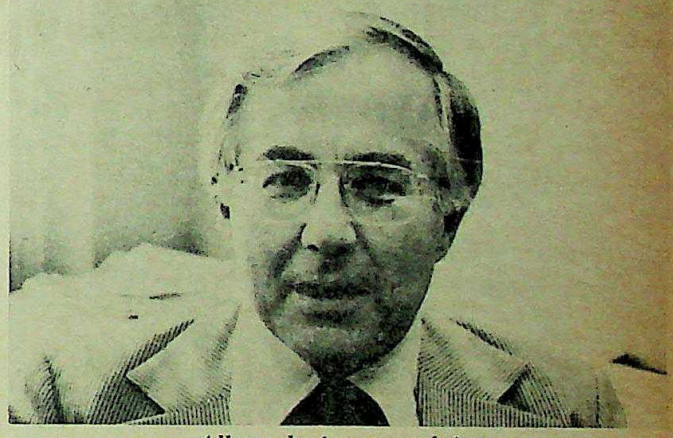
EMBARRASSING CONTROVERSY

Among the others embarrassed by this Briefingate controversy is William Casey, the CIA Director. The documents referring to a mole in the Carter White House are addressed to Casey (who was then Reagan's campaign manager); and James Baker, the present White House Chief of Staff, who now admits to having seen purloined Carter papers, claims that Casey showed them to him. For his part, Casey denies all wrongdoing. So does former National Security Adviser, Richard Allen, who while admitting to having handled some Carter documents says that they were mailed to him by 'an anonymous well-wisher'. David Gergen, Communications Director in the White House who had earlier denied having seen any stolen papers has also changed his story. Rendering his earlier denial inoperative, in a manner worthy of Ronald Ziegler, Gergen now says that while searching through his files he has indeed turned up some Carter campaign material that must have been originally filched.

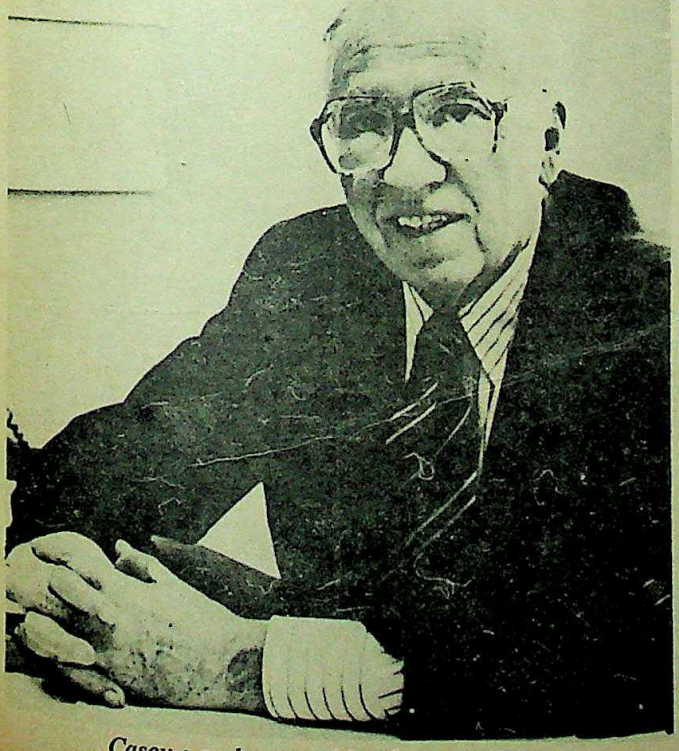
As the non-denial denials mount up, it seems clear (at this point in time) that Carter documents were stolen and that the Reagan campaign team had a pretty good idea what Carter was up to. But the central questions remain: did the thieving make any difference? Would Carter have won if Reagan had played by the book (rather than a lot of stolen books, of course)?

It is difficult to sustain the claim that the stolen documents turned the tide. Judging by Reagan's landslide victory, he would have won anyhow. But then, how much difference did Watergate make? Wouldn't Nixon have won anyhow? Is an immoral act any more defensible because it was unnecessary? ◆

Ronald Reagan.



Allen : denies wrongdoing.



Casey : embarrassed by the controversy.

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TENNIS CORRUPTION

Payoffs And Ripoffs

IN A BOOK just published [Short Circuit by Michael Mewshaw is published by Collins at £10.95 (hardback) and £5.95 (paperback)] an American author who spent six months following the men's professional circuit, claims to have uncovered cases of illegal guarantees, the splitting of prize money and arranging of exhibition matches, betting on results among the players, accusations of drug abuse, preferential treatment for the stars, business deals between tournament directors and umpires and 'tanking'—the deliberate throwing of a match.

For his painstaking research and his pains, Mewshaw was punched in the mouth by an irate tournament director at this year's Italian Open.

In Antibes, Mewshaw turned up an umpire willing to talk about what went on behind the scenes ('He stressed he wouldn't talk unless I guaranteed him anonymity').

"He told me of umpires who routinely accepted gifts and entertainment and who let tournament directors set them up with women. 'This is a business, a multi-million dollar international business. People don't give things away free. . .the guy that gives it expects something in return.

" 'Some umpires get so friendly with the tournament directors, maybe they're not even aware of what they're doing. Maybe it's unconscious but it looks bad. For all I know it could be collusion because umpires have so many side deals going. Some of them are buying cars—expensive automobiles—at terrific discounts through tournament directors. After that, how can they be independent?' "

QUESTIONABLE PRACTICES

Mewshaw then asked the umpire about other questionable practices in the sport, particularly about 'splits' where players agree to divide the first and second place prize money *before* they play the final.

After confirming that this happened, mostly in exhibition matches the umpire revealed that players would split sets as well.

" 'They split sets in exhibitions too! The promoter wants a longer match, more excitement. And if it's on TV he has a time-slot to fill. He'll ask the players to split the first two sets and play an honest third set.'

"He cited an example from direct experience. Several years ago, he had been scheduled to officiate at the finals of an eight-man round robin. Beforehand, in the locker room, he said he had listened, dumbfounded, as two of the game's biggest names discussed how they would orchestrate the match. One would win the first set, the other would take the second, then they'd fight out the third set.

"The final had followed the scenario down to the last detail. 'I sat up in the chair,' said the umpire, 'feeling sick. But what could I say? I just happened to overhear what I shouldn't have heard. Thank God it was only an exhibition.'

McEnroe : given unequal treatment.

OTHER ABUSES

"This was one of those distinctions which tennis people always insist upon, but which eludes me," writes Mewshaw. "Exhibitions are frequently televised and reported in the newspapers as if they were legitimate matches. What's more, they are often hyped as Challenge Cups, Shoot-Outs, Grudge Duels, decisive encounters between players determined to prove they're number one."

Other abuses on the circuit are less easy to pin down, though Yannick Noah admitted drug involvement in an interview with a French magazine and Mewshaw produced the fascinating theory that some players sniff cocaine from their wristbands during matches.

The thing which is currently annoying other players on the circuit more than any other is the preferential treatment accorded the top names. Typical was the comment of Vince Van Patten, a likeable American who currently stands 65th in the world ranking. "When there are close calls, the top players are always going to get the benefit of the doubt," said Van Patten.

"Until people are interested in seeing good tennis, not just stars, you know they're never going to default a guy like McEnroe because if they do, then they don't have a tournament. It's not like football or some other team sport where even if you kick out a star player people still want to watch."

UNEQUAL TREATMENT

The same complaint was levelled against McEnroe in Dallas recently by the Czech, Tomas Smid, after an acrimonious match in which he was warned about his behaviour and McEnroe was not.

Interest—and money available—has mushroomed since tennis went out in 1968 and too many tournaments are now chasing too few stars. Hence guarantees.

"Appearance money is a response to the laws of sup-

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THE RAYMOND'

A PALETTE O

FASHION HAS A NATURAL ELEGANCE

Deep fawn, sand beige, black coffee, tawny brown... suiting colours this season have a natural appeal. A subtle fawn suiting with a nifty twill stripe is perfect for this single-breasted, 2-piece suit with two buttons. The jacket has a centre slit and 9 cm. wide lapels.

A pale beige shirt is teamed with a red kerchief, set off with brown shoes and socks. The fabric? Raymond's. Perfectly fashioned for the occa

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FASHION GUIDE

ARTHY COLOURS

FIT FOR THE OCCASION

its always look better
a slimmer figure. A
mple way to shape up:
smaller portions and
use second helpings.
to walk briskly every
for at least 30
nutes. Avoid loud
ours, clingy fabrics,
hy styles.

OFF THE CUFF

Cufflinks are back, adding a personal signature to your individual style. Especially in vogue is real jewellery: gold with a spark of diamond, solid silver. In classic, neat shapes and designs: slim rectangles, perfect squares.

ALL TIED UP

s are slimmer —
ver wider than 9 cms.
he blade. A tiny
ignia may make a
erved statement.
hile a dashing yet well-
haved stripe adds a
w dimension to
porate dressing.

COME CLEAN

Look after your clothes well... and they will keep you looking good for years. Always dry-clean your suits. Do not press the garment directly . Always place a fine, damp muslin cloth over the garment and iron over it.

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ply and demand," Mewshaw was told by Arthur Ashe, the 1975 Wimbledon champion, Pro Council member and one of the most respected voices in tennis. "Tournaments know the top players are worth more than the prize money they're offered.

"Top players get better treatment, unequal treatment. It was that way in my day. It's worse now. The stars are protected and all the players know it. There's collusion between some tournament directors and some umpires. Umpires are ordered not to discipline stars."

The recent history of tennis is littered with examples of umpires who have paid the price for firmness. At the 1976 Master finals in Houston Jack Stahr disqualified Raul Ramirez for persistent misconduct. Stahr was overruled by the tournament organisers and Ramirez was reinstated. At the US Open in 1979 Frank Hammond defaulted Ilie Nastase in a match against John McEnroe. Hammond was removed from the chair and Nastase allowed to finish the match.

TIMELY CHANGE

Mewshaw concludes his timely book: "Of course, if tennis were merely burlesque and no more, it wouldn't be worth saving; it could be allowed to decay and die. But it has the new vitality and the ancient traditions, the attractive personnel, the sheer excitement and symmetrical beauty to be much more than vaudeville. And its reform would not take years of study. . .Nor would it cost millions of dollars. Professional tennis could be completely changed in a matter of weeks if it had the courage and decency to enforce the rules it has already written for itself."

Since those words were written tennis has bestirred itself. Before imposing total fines of £3,350 on McEnroe for misconduct at the French Open, Marshall Happer, the man in charge of administering the Pro Council's new Code of Conduct, promised, "We are about to see a change. The boat is going to have to be rocked."

Within two weeks came the year's suspension of Guillermo Vilas. It will be fascinating to see whether the Pro Council can make it stick and if tennis can once more wear white without a blush. ♦

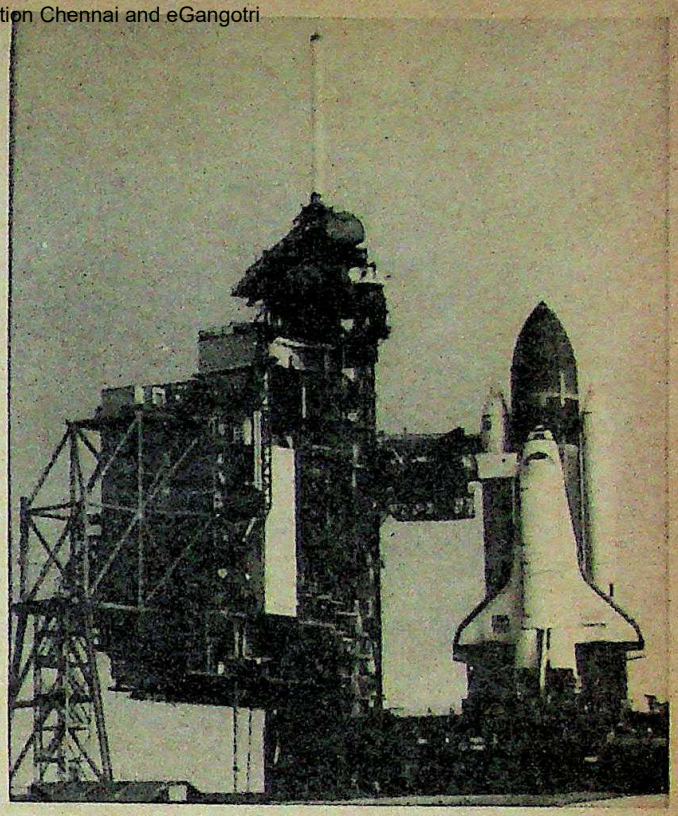
WASHINGTON LETTER

Sally Rides The Space Shuttle

THE NEXT SPACE Shuttle carries a black astronaut in place of the gimmick in the last shuttle—Dr Sally Ride. Thus Reagan will have gone out of his way—indeed out of the earth's atmosphere—to genuflect towards the two big groups from whom he is most estranged.

These newsworthy events might have tended to obscure a more interesting story about the Space Shuttle programme. In one important respect it is a shambles.

When it was first mooted, the idea was this: a rocket would carry the shuttle-craft into space from the Kennedy Space Centre at Cape Canaveral. When its mission was completed the gliding craft would then re-enter the earth's atmosphere and land at a specially constructed runway at the Cape.



Space Shuttle programme : economically doomed.

The alternative—landing it at Edwards Air Force Base in the California desert—is time wasting and expensive. The Edwards AFB, with its vast dry lake-bed surface, was to be used initially to test the craft's landing capabilities. These have now been proved.

Last month's mission, the seventh, was meant to return to the Cape. But poor weather forced a return to Edwards. Which means that future Shuttle flights will again be delayed by the time that it takes to prepare and transport the craft 3,000 miles across the country on the back of a special NASA Boeing 747.

NASA officials pretend publicly that this is a minor setback. In fact, it was the subject of a furious and unreported row between the shuttle director, General James Abrahamson and controllers at the Johnson Space Centre, in Houston.

Abrahamson, with a party of VIPs that was to have included Reagan and Nancy before they cancelled out, was at the Cape. He wanted Shuttle number seven to land there. Houston controllers argued for Edwards after adverse weather conditions were reported in Florida and they won.

The question which has not been raised in the Press here, force-fed as it is on NASA hand outs, is this: can the Shuttle ever rely on a landing at the Cape, with its one-runway facilities and dodgy weather ? If it can't, the whole multibillion dollar programme is economically doomed.

America's production of space centres—in Florida, Texas, California, Alabama and New Mexico—symbolise an ancient discipline which lies at the heart of politics here: pork-barrelling.

As soon as any major public project is mooted, American politicians use

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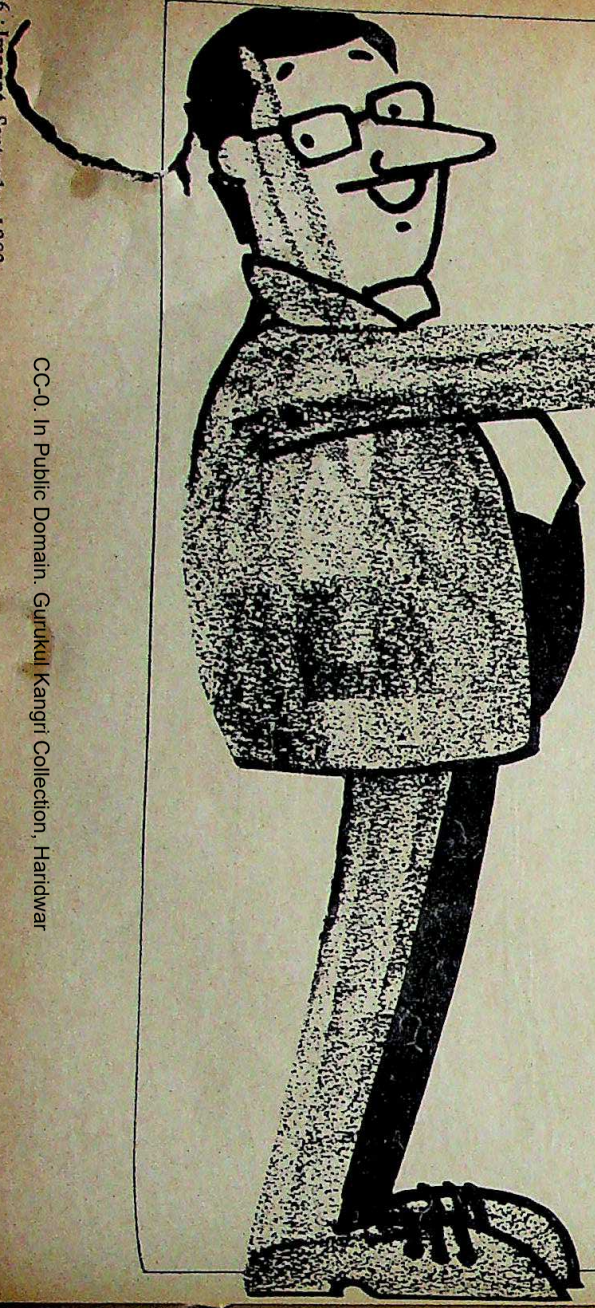

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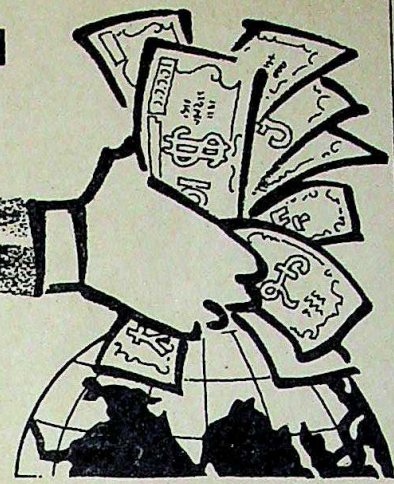

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their votes to vie for a slice of the cake in their own state. The space programme still pays out millions of bucks to the area lucky enough to have been chosen for one of the NASA facilities.

Florida and the Cape are great for launching rockets. The sub-equatorial location ensures an extra 700 mph boost from the earth's own rotation and a huge ocean down range in case of post launch accidents. But it is becoming clear that, for much of the year, its freakish weather makes it unsuitable for landings. One Florida shower of rain on landing approach would, it is calculated, strip every heat tile off the Shuttle.

NASA continues to baffle American newsmen with high tech and showbiz, especially the latter. Meanwhile, realists here are pointing out that the hated French, with their simple, unmanned satellite-carrying Arianne rocket—no blacks, no women, no gays—might end up wiping out America in the race to fill space with peeping-tom devices and other junk. ♦

EXPOSING THE M15
A Matter Of Trust

LAST OCTOBER IN London, legal lightning struck 31-year-old Rupert Allason. Under the pseudonym Nigel West, Allason had written but not yet published a book called *A Matter of Trust*, a history of M15, the British counterintelligence agency from 1945-72. A copy of the manuscript found its way to M15. Britain's attorney general quickly persuaded the High Court of Justice to enjoin publication. A government affidavit asserted the story told by Allason (West) could only have come from M15 officers and dealt with 'incidents, operations, investigations and other matters which have not previously been made public.'

RING OF FIVE

A few months later, after Allason agreed to deletion of a few names and specifics dealings with Soviet spies roosting at the 'top of the intelligence tree' in Britain, the book was published. The intervention of Her Majesty's government had struck Allason with literary as well as legal lightning. Thanks to the publicity, the book has become a bestseller in Britain. Now, as *The Circus*, the exposé has just appeared in a less censored American edition. Allason has been travelling about the States promoting it.

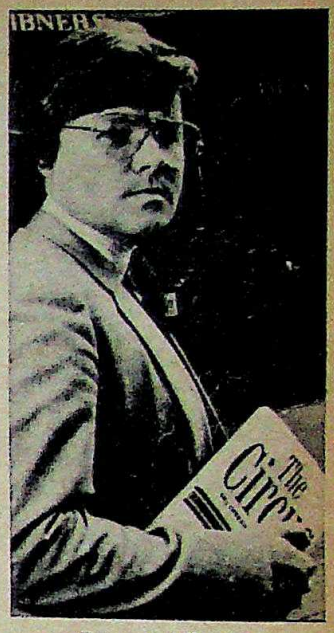
Says Allason, "The diligent reader can ascertain that a former director-general and deputy director-general of M15 were the subjects of investigation as possible Soviet 'moles'. Since the end of World War II—in which, incidentally, M15 performed superbly—the agency appears to have protected far more Soviet agents than it ever caught. It did, in fact, according to Allason, uncover on its own only one small-fry spy during the entire postwar period. Meanwhile it failed to uncover and quite possibly even warned those high-placed British Foreign Service officers and others who constituted the most intellectually distinguished ring of traitors in history: Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, Harold (Kim) Philby and John Cairncross.

Four members of what the KGB calls the 'Ring of Five'. And who was number five? There are many candidates: British governmental and business institutions seem to possess a real genius for turning out spear-carriers vulnerable to the promise of a KGB commission, a few pounds or the intimacy of one sex or another in 'honeytrap' stings routinely arranged by the KGB. Once compromised, most of the KGB's British subjects more or less promptly and patriotically reported in to M15, which assigned them professional case officers to control their spying for the Soviets. That, as it turns out, is precisely what the KGB expected all along. Once having learned the identities of the case officers, the KGB then made overtures to them—the true targets. Belatedly, M15 learned that at least five of its case officers had been approached by the KGB. But not one—for fear of revealing that his cover had been blown—ever reported the matter to a superior. How many British intelligence agents the KGB actually 'turned' is guesswork, but Allason believes that there were many more than five.

ABYSMAL RECORD

Allason readily concedes that all the world's intelligence agencies occasionally get penetrated by their opponents. William Hood, former CIA counterintelligence officer, once said, "Any intelligence officer who assumes his service is penetration-proof is ignorant of intelligence history."

But the British record, Allason says, is simply abysmal. Why? Allason, Rebecca West, John le Carré (himself, as David John Moore Cornwell, of M15) and other British writers and intellectuals have grappled with the question over the years. 'Peacetime' espionage in Britain is far from a capital offence; when one spy was sentenced



Rupert Allason.

to 42 years (most get off with single-digit terms) his punishment generally was thought excessive. That leniency, however, merely reflects values of the British elite. One theory has it that such elitists as Burgess, Maclean and Philby, mourning the decline of the Empire of their youth, found in the Soviet Union their new Empire and their rightful place in it. Another theory traces the treason virus to the contempt, among certain Britishers, of all things American, particularly America's relatively classless egalitarianism; in the Soviet Union, by contrast, workers have their place, elitists have theirs and the mannered, disguised British contempt of one class for another does not exist. Russians may be cynical about their rulers but hardly hate them.

And as cynical as the Soviets are toward their own burdened and belaboured system, they are surely not stupid. The sheer ease with which they have manipulated the wealthy and privileged in British society provides evidence enough of that. Allason is giving us a lesson and it is very simple: Never underestimate the other guy. ♦

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The Expatriates

MAHMUD SIPRA:

A New Asian Millionaire

THIS HAS BEEN THE YEAR OF MAHMUD Sipra. In 1982 only a handful of people in India had heard of Sipra. But by early 1983 that had begun to change. *Asian Post*, a glossy newsmagazine for overseas Asians published from London, put him on its cover in March. 'Sipra: Shipping's Whiz Kid', the blurb screamed. The story dubbed him the new 'Ravi Tikoo' and went on to rave about his immense wealth, his business acumen, his homes in three continents, his racehorses, his suits, his butler and even his aftershave ('*Arrogance* made specially for him in New York from a Swiss formula').

Copies of that issue found their way to India and some curiosity was aroused. Everyone had heard of Tikoo, but who was Sipra? Three months later, he was back in the news. He was producing an English language film called *Pawn To King Three* and had cast, in addition to Omar Sharif, Peter Ustinov and Nastassia Kinski, Shashi Kapoor and Salma Agha.

The following month, Sipra returned to the film magazines, this time as Salma Agha's constant escort and fiance. Not only was he rich and successful, but if photographs of the couple were to be believed, he was young, presentable and debonair.

By now, he had set the press buzzing. Who was Mahmud Sipra? Is Salma leading him on? *Cine Blitz* breathlessly demanded. Wasn't he just like (another expatriate millionaire) Nirmal Sethia? *Gentleman* asked. What will he do next? *Movie* wondered. And the *Sunday Observer* simply reproduced the *Asian Post*'s Ravi Tikoo analogy. Despite the gossip and the speculation, the central questions remained. Was Sipra really as rich as was made out? What conceivable interest could a shipping magnate have in films? Did he, in fact, own the *Post*, whose story had set the ball rolling? What it boiled down to really was: who is Mahmud Sipra?

Lounging easily in an over-stuffed sofa in a two-bedroom suite at Bombay's Sea Rock Hotel, Sipra seems a little taken aback by all the speculation and gossip. Dressed simply in a Pathan-style outfit, he seems the antithesis of his own pre-publicity. He is young (40), but an air of youthfulness makes him seem even younger. Slim and of medium height, he bears an uncanny resemblance to journalist Dilip Thakore (who edits *Business World*) and plays down his

This is the first part of a new, regular series on expatriate Asians. It will focus mainly on those who have attained success in Europe and America.

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affluence. The jetsetting playboy of the *Post*'s story is nowhere in view and in this context, it is difficult to see him in his Moorish castle or imagine his 'gentleman's gentleman' (as the *Post* approvingly dubbed his butler) helping him into his Dior suit.

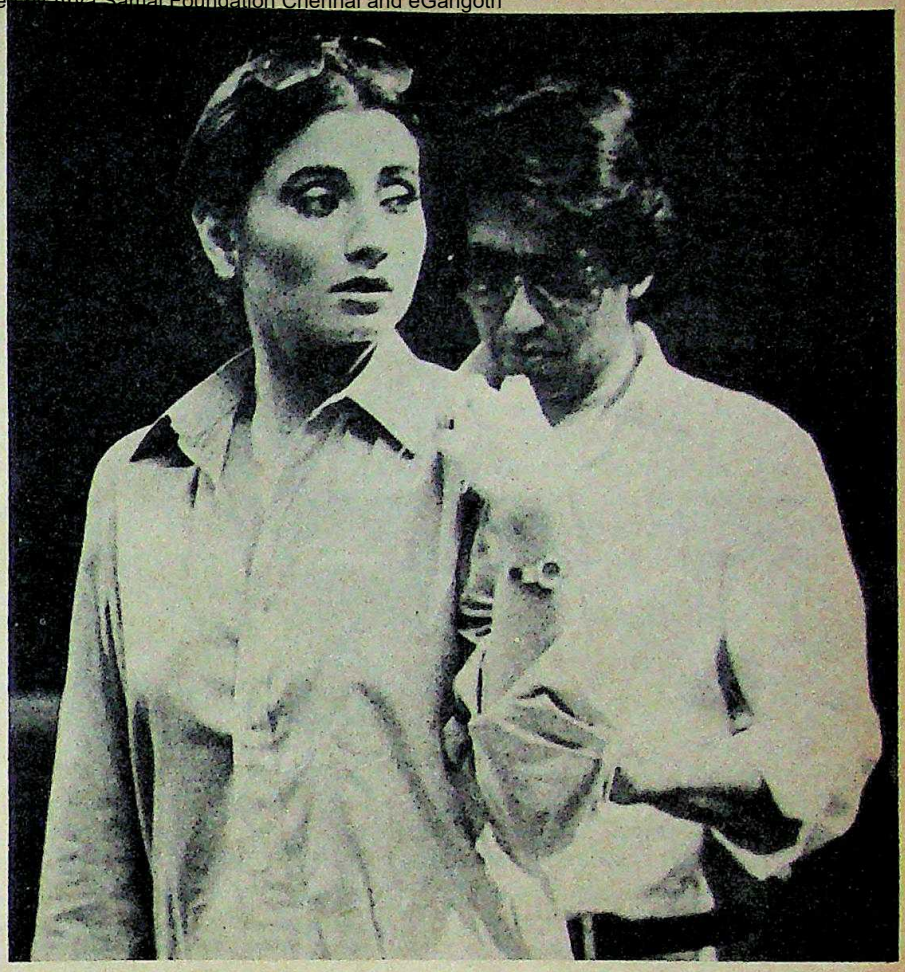
Sipra is in India to finalise the details of the casting of *Pawn To King Three*, and now that he is here, he seems to be considering making two Hindi films (with Salma) as well. He is not really aware of what the film magazines have written about him and after a relatively low-key existence ('my PR agency was paid to keep my name out of the papers') is a little apprehensive about the media attention.

He is clearly rich. How rich he will not say, but estimates of his personal wealth put him in the $20-25 million bracket. What is most astonishing about the fortune is that the money has all been made after 1974 and that in 1977, he nearly lost it all, teetered on the edge of bankruptcy and then, bounced back. Even by the standards of the expatriate Asians, the Murjanis, the Harilelas and the others, his is an amazing story.

It has its beginnings in Ranchi, where he was the only male offspring of an army officer. In 1946, the family shifted to Lahore and Sipra's earliest memories are of the trains full of refugees pulling into the Lahore Cantonment station during the bloodbaths of 1947. He grew up in Lahore and Karachi, rising to be some kind of school *dada*—the sort of chap who could fix anything but always came bottom of the class.

He dropped out of school before his Senior Cambridge examination and started out in advertising in Karachi when he was seventeen and a half. He made a good copy-writer and soon became Creative Director of SASA, one of the city's larger agencies. For two years, he also ran his own operation, Sipravon Advertising, (the appendage von is a private Punjabi joke) till financial difficulties closed it down.

Fortunately for Sipra, Pakistani television began to expand in 1967 and the ad agencies hunted around for film directors. "I took pains to learn how to make commercials and documentaries," he recalls, and by the end of it, he was one of the most sought after directors of commercials. This phase came to an end in late 1971 after Zulfikar Ali Bhutto came to power. As Sipra sees it, 'Bhutto opened the floodgates to hell' by dismantling a free enterprise system that was working reasonably well and resorting to persecuting individuals to advance his populist image.



Sipra's image was that of a jet setting playboy, with limitless resources. The whirlwind romance with Salma added to that image.

By 1972, Sipra had shifted to London. He had hoped to make commercials for British TV but found that without union membership, assignments were hard to come by. Finally, he began moonlighting. British directors would accept assignments and then, off the record, pass them on to him. It was an unsatisfactory way of doing things and finally, Sipra decided that he couldn't live on the earnings of one commercial every month and a half or so.

In March 1973, he crossed the Atlantic and landed in New York. It was, he remembers, a frightening place. Work was hard to come by and only the fear of going back to Pakistan as a failure prevented him from throwing in the towel: "I lived on ambition and adrenalin." Then, he had a stroke of luck. A division of the Interpublic advertising agency hired him to look after its Far Eastern interests and a few weeks later, the Simmons and Eden agency appointed him Vice President of its operations in the Far East. He shifted into a good flat, earned an annual salary of $40,000 and began to take the long leisurely lunches so beloved of advertising people.

It was after one such lunch that his job fell apart. He returned to his office (444, Madison Avenue) and was told that the Treasurer wanted to see him. He sensed at once, that something had gone wrong. The Treasurer was polite but business-like. Had Sipra noticed a form on his desk? Well, it was an appli-

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cation form. Would he be good enough to fill it up there and then? And so he did, scribbling his name, date of birth, address and the like, till he came to the sections that asked for his alien registration number and his social security number. Did he know his numbers, enquired the Treasurer? Well, no said Sipra. He hadn't actually been allocated any such numbers.

"You son of a bitch! Are you crazy?" the Treasurer was shouting now. "Do you know that you could be deported? We could get into trouble for hiring an illegal immigrant!" He was, of course fired, and by the time he returned to his own office, it was almost as though he had never existed. His papers had been packed up and sent to his apartment, his name was no longer on the door and his secretary had been returned to the typing pool.

There was no question of finding another job and Sipra spent his days wandering the streets, depressed and dejected. On one such afternoon, he strolled into the 21 Club (his expensive tastes had not deserted him) and slumped into a seat by the bar. An old man in an advanced state of inebriation struck up a conversation. "Are you an Ay-rab?" he demanded loudly.

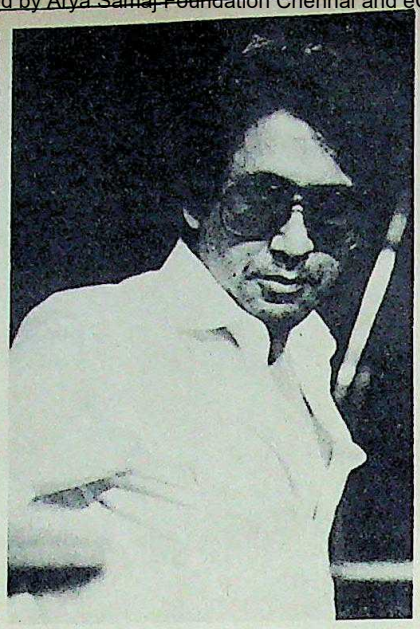
"No I'm not."

"Well are you from Argentine?" The old man ran through his high school geography before coming up with Pakistan. "Yeah? Well, may be this will interest you," he said and showed him a newspaper. The Yom Kippur War had begun that day.

Sipra forgot about the encounter till one day, quite desperate, he came across the old man's card and called his number in Wilmington, Delaware. His new friend did not seem surprised to hear from him. "Give me your address and I'll have you picked up," he said. Half an hour later, a limousine whisked Sipra to a helicopter and in 45 minutes, he landed in a golf course where the old man and another man were playing.

They offered him lunch (oysters) and asked if he knew any 'Ay-rab princes'. No, said Sipra, he didn't. Well, said the old man, there's a shortage of oil these days. Do you know of any tankers with unsold crude in them? Naturally, Sipra did not know what he was talking about, and after lunch, the helicopter took him back to New York.

As it turned out, his neighbour was a Jewish lawyer who he hoped would help with his immigration problems.



By mid-1974, Sipra had risen from virtual bankruptcy to immense affluence. He bought himself a house on Fifth Avenue and a Lear jet.

"Sorry," said the neighbour. "I'm a shipping lawyer." A bell went off inside Sipra's head. "Do you know how I can get a list of tankers with unsold oil in them?" he asked. The lawyer suggested that he call Lloyds. Sipra did but found, to his horror, that Lloyds gave him a huge computer print-out of over a hundred tankers. Fortunately, his neighbour came to his assistance. He made Sipra call up Rotterdam and various other ports and check if any of the tankers had unsold oil. He did and finally came up with a list of 11 ships. He called his friend from the 21 Club, went to see him and handed him the list. The old man was pleased. He summoned two executives and told them: "You've been working on this for weeks. This kid got me the information in two days!"

Sipra had hoped for some kind of reward and was not surprised when the old man called him for lunch some days later. Half-way through the meal, he pulled out an envelope and handed it to the Pakistani. Says Sipra: "I knew there was money in that envelope—money, I needed desperately—and I wanted to forget about lunch and just run out and open it." But the old man droned on for another hour. When he finally left, he rushed to the curb and opened it. "It was, sure enough, a cheque but when I saw the amount, my legs went weak."

It was for $746,000 and came with a note that said it was by way of commission for the oil deal—and that it was the first installment. Sipra was to receive three more cheques until finally he made $3.5 million. "It was incredible. At that stage I didn't understand shipping. I didn't realize that this was how things worked. That commissions were always paid and paid honestly."

At 30, Mahmud Sipra was a millionaire, almost by accident.

After that though, he left nothing to chance. He returned in triumph to 444 Madison Avenue, bought a suite of offices on the penthouse floor and went into trading. "I was like an animal who had tasted blood," he remembers. The oil crisis was still on, and Sipra began trading in oil. ("I grasp techniques easily and quickly—that's what comes of being an advertising man!") He hired a team of young people and wrote letters all over the world announcing that his company would supply commodities on request. One of the first enquiries was for synthetic fibre and he returned to his friend the old man, who was, it transpired, in the synthetics business. He sold Sipra three thousand tonnes at the domestic rate, which the young Pakistani then sold around the world at the prevailing price (which was $1.20 per pound over the domestic rate).

By mid-1974, even Sipra could not believe the change in his fortunes. He had risen literally, from virtual bankruptcy to immense affluence. He bought himself a house on Fifth Avenue and his first Lear jet. His lifestyle changed overnight and his company continued to grow.

In 1974, he sold scrap iron to Pakistan but found no vessel to carry it. He heard that Gipsum Transportation had a fleet of obsolete ships, one of which was docked at Statten Island and decided to buy it. The ship had been built in 1946 and was a 10,000 tonner and he named it, on the spur of the moment, the *El-Sipra*. When it got to Karachi with its load of scrap, Sipra

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sold the ship itself for scrap (for $1 million) and made much more than the $325,000 it had cost him to buy it. Later he repeated this technique all over the world till others got wise to it.

Flushed with his success, he bought a food processing plant and opened a chain of men's stores in New York called *Lord Sipra*. He also drew up plans for marketing *Arrogance Cologne*.

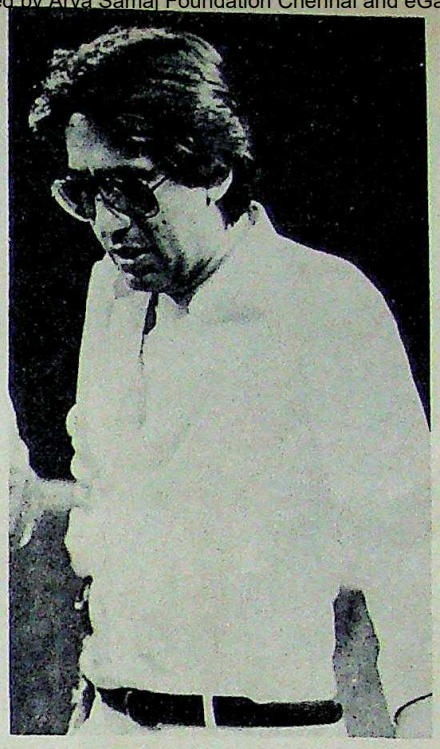
It was great while it lasted but by 1977, Sipra was in deep financial trouble. "I was doing well and the big ship owners were out to destroy me," he claims. His company had an annual turnover of $150 million but nothing had prepared him for the spate of lawsuits. On one day, 37 lawsuits, naming him personally, were filed and soon his ships began to be arrested and his bank accounts frozen. It was a bad time, made worse by Sipra's unnecessary diversifications (such as the food processing plants) and his tendency to spread himself too thin.

As bankruptcy loomed, he began selling his ships, his jet, his property and his cars. He shut down offices and laid off employees till finally he had only four people left working for him. There seemed no doubt that Sipra was finished. The fairy tale was over.

Not quite. By 1978, Sipra was ready to try again. He got back into trading and made a substantial profit on an Arabian deal. He found a benevolent banker who believed in him and went back into shipping. Because there was a shipping recession, he was able to pick up vessels at low prices.

This time he did not let the sudden success go to his head. There were no more *Lord Sipra* stores and the food processing plant was quietly disposed of. He avoided projecting himself, after the personal attacks and the lawsuits and professionalised his organisation. He decided not to restrict himself to New York and opened a London office (on Brook Street) and let both offices compete against each other.

He worked 18-hour days (till he finally collapsed at a board meeting from exhaustion) and rebuilt his empire. Much to everyone's surprise, he pulled it off. His company teetered at the edge of bankruptcy, then pulled back and eventually, soared even higher. As he says, "In America if you are bankrupt, you are finished. Nobody will ever talk to you again. But if you turn around and make a comeback, then the US corporate entity is so impressed that it never forgets you."



Sipra signed up Nastassia Kinski, Omar Sharif, Christopher Lee and others for his film. The budget was $ 15 million.

Assisted by this goodwill, Sipra turned 1979 and 1980 into years of great growth.

By 1981, he had become a force on the commodity markets. He took on the bigwigs who control major commodities by operating cartels. As he says proudly, "I started trading in wheat and made money on it. And then I broke the fertilizer cartel."

He changed the direction of his life as well. "I was fortunate in having a good staff of executives who could run the show without me," he says. Much to everyone's surprise, Sipra turned to writing. "I had always wanted to write —after all, I had started out as a copywriter." So he began work on a semi-autobiographical novel about a young Pakistani who made it big in international shipping. "I started to write *Pawn To King Three* in August 1981," he remembers. "The first page was written on a paper napkin but the rest of it flowed quite smoothly and took four and a half months. On Christmas Eve, 1981, the last page was ready." Sipra claims that he hadn't intended to publish the book but that his lawyer sent it to a publisher who liked it and accepted it. The novel will be out this autumn in hardcover.

A move into film-making came next. "The book was written visually. I could almost see the scenes as I wrote it," he explains. "Moreover, I had the ships that would be needed for the filming. So I thought: why not turn it into a film?"

Before this could happen though, Sipra got a call from Ben Fisz, an old-style producer who had been responsible for such war movies as *The Heroes of Telemark* and *The Battle of Britain*. Fisz and director Terrence Young (who made the early James Bond films) had been making a spy thriller called *The Jigsaw Man* with Laurence Olivier, Michael Caine and Susan George. Unfortunately, they had run out of money. Would Sipra be willing to help?

Says Sipra, "We had set up Nitemeg Productions to invest in films when this offer came along. We decided to advance our entry into the film world and took over the production of *Jigsaw Man*." After a fresh injection of funds, filming resumed and Sipra began to be written about in such film trade journals as *Variety* and the *Hollywood Reporter*. After the film went into post-production, Young was fired and a taut 97-minute thriller emerged. There will be a Royal Premiere later this month, and Sipra has already begun to recover his money. US cable rights were sold to Home Box Office for $3.5 million earlier this year.

Pawn To King Three was next. Sipra had a professional script-writer shape his novel into a screenplay and hired Peter Hunt (*On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, *Gold* and *Pompeii*) to direct. The film was budgeted at $15 million and he is proud of the fact that he sold it to the City of London as a simple commodity deal. "You acquire a commodity—in this case, a film—at a certain price and a year later, you resell it at a higher price. That's how the banks in the City saw the project and advanced me the necessary finance. Of course, it helped that I had other assets and could cross-collateralise it."

As they began signing up actors, various big names were put under contract: Omar Sharif, Christopher Lee, Nastassia Kinski, Joseph Cotton and Shashi Kapoor. The script called for a

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Sipra insists that Salma's role came first and their personal involvement later. He is now engaged to her.

young girl of Indo-Pak origin and Sipra was considering Rekha when his film executives suggested Salma Agha. She was screen-tested, found suitable and signed up.

During the testing and negotiating, Sipra and Agha appear to have fallen in love—though Sipra insists that the role came first and their personal involvement later. The relationship presented problems because Sipra was already married—to Sameena, the daughter of a wealthy Pakistani shipping family. The marriage is now on the rocks and there may be a messy divorce suit.

Sipra is now engaged to Salma and the couple plan on getting married once he is legally able to do so. Meanwhile, Agha has pulled out of three Hindi films to concentrate on *Pawn To King Three*. Sipra is planning two Hindi films himself—one a 'Muslim subject' and the other a sort of *Electric-Horseman*-meets-the-*Champ*, movie. He will direct at least one of them himself; and both films are budgeted at under Rs 20 lakhs each, almost as if they are a rich man's home movies.

Why is a successful shipping tycoon getting so embroiled in the world of Hindi films? Sipra's answer is that he was getting bored with shipping and commodity broking. "In the morning I would send off ships, in the afternoon I would buy wheat and in the evening I would make a fertilizer deal. I began hating myself and my life." He has always thought of himself as a director after those early years in Pakistan and now that he has the money, he intends to get back into the business.

Meanwhile, he has other ambitious plans. One scheme involves buying a luxury liner (at around $4.5 million), refitting it and bringing it to Bombay. The ship will then be firmly anchored off the shoreline and turned into a five star hotel. He would ask a foreign group like Hyatt to manage it for him and would then have his own five star hotel in Bombay at a cost of under Rs 8 crores—primarily because he will have eliminated the need to purchase expensive real estate. Of course, the scheme will require government approval and there is the problem of location: where in Bombay can it be anchored?

Whatever happens to this project and to his films, one thing seems clear: South Asia is going to see quite a lot of Sipra in the months ahead. Indeed some people say that he is determined to project himself in India and Pakistan because he has political ambitions in Pakistan.

After the *Asian Post* put him on its cover, Sipra acquired the magazine and now has a perfect vehicle for his ideas. The films will make him well-known here. And the biggest surprise is still to come. While Al Pacino and other Hollywood stars were being considered for the lead in *Pawn To King Three*, it was decided that Sipra himself would play the lead. Any Indian or Pakistani starring in a major English-language motion picture is certain to become famous in his own country.

For his part, Sipra plays down all such speculation. Unlike most New York and London-based Pakistanis of his generation, his style is deceptively low-key. He does not drink, is distinctly unflashy and lacks the characteristic swagger of his compatriots. As far as he is concerned he has been incredibly lucky; his life is almost a fairy tale. And now that he has made his money, he can afford to indulge his hobbies and fantasies. ♦

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Partap Sharma

Interviewed By Shirin Mehta
Photographed By Ashok Gupta

THE ROOM IS cosy, filled with books and piled, normally, with untidy reams of paper that include his first drafts, his rewrites and his pure fantasies. Included in the decor are a large mirror ('It's not here for show but for the times I practise my karate') two cane chairs, a comfortable bed and a straw carpet.

Partap Sharma, perhaps the country's most recognisable 'voice', in documentaries and commercials and the author of several plays and books (among them *Dog Detective Ranjha*, modelled on his own alsatian) is evidently at home here. In this flat on Bombay's Warden Road, he lives while he works—making coffee from his tiny kitchen with a rest-corner where he can lie down.

"This is the spot where I cut myself off from the world at large when I write. My normal schedules are then disrupted. Sometimes I work 18 hours a day and frankly when I am in the mood to write, I get very irritable. I have two sides to me, the gregarious and the introverted one. This is the side I fall back on when I am writing. My imagination takes over to such an extent that very often I am not aware if the sounds I have heard are real or imagined."

This is where *The Surangini Tales* took shape, *The Dog Detective* book was written and the play *A Touch Of Brightness*, which earned Partap so much fame and notoriety, was conceived. Naturally, Ranjha is very much a part of the environment and spends his time sleeping or woofing in the room with an occasional pat from his master.

The room has been Partap's for years. Long ago, in 1960 or so he found employment with ESSO after a great deal of trouble. "I quit after just 13 days (though I was earning Rs 900 a month) and continued with my regular commentaries. At that time AIR used to pay just Rs 15 per programme and my monthly income from such recordings was Rs 75. But within three months I managed to make both ends meet." This was when he got the room.

Today, crowded with books; his own reference volumes and a few oddments which Partap finds interesting, it is a home away from home (another flat in Breach Candy just a 100 yards away).

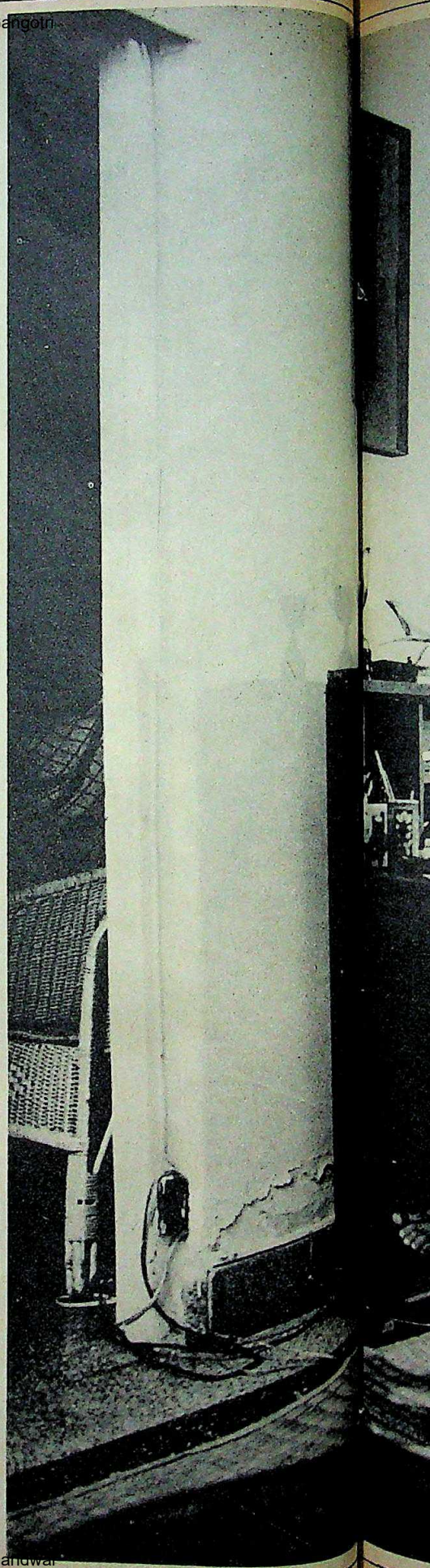
"It is, of course, much more untidy when I'm half-way through a book. There is usually my first draft in the first pile, a bit of the corrected, edited version in the second, my additions and inserts in the third and so on. Nobody understands the order in the chaos and even my secretary is instructed to leave it all well alone."

Ranged out where the eye can see them and Partap can gloat over them are Ranjha's trophies. "He used to get first prize in the Obedience and Police Dog trials. Later I didn't enter him—there didn't seem to be much point when the prize was practically always his."

His busy schedule includes three to four hours of recording per day and the normal activities of a writer. His voice was developed through the theatre and the constant interest of a school teacher who used to let Partap stand at one end of a valley and throw his voice across. "I often used to read plays aloud in dormitories and when I started winning debates and elocution competitions I learned to enunciate."

A short stint with theatre and film acting helped him for his play *A Touch Of Brightness*. But the trouble they had producing it put Partap off writing adult novels for some time. "I started writing parables in the form of fables and the *Surangini Tales* were born.

"My aim is, of course, to make my writing support me so that I can write even out of Bombay. Right now, of course, my commentaries are my bread and butter. The royalties from my books have begun to give me hope that this will someday be possible." Even if this does come through he will probably keep this room which is so specially his, as a base—to return to from time to time. ♦



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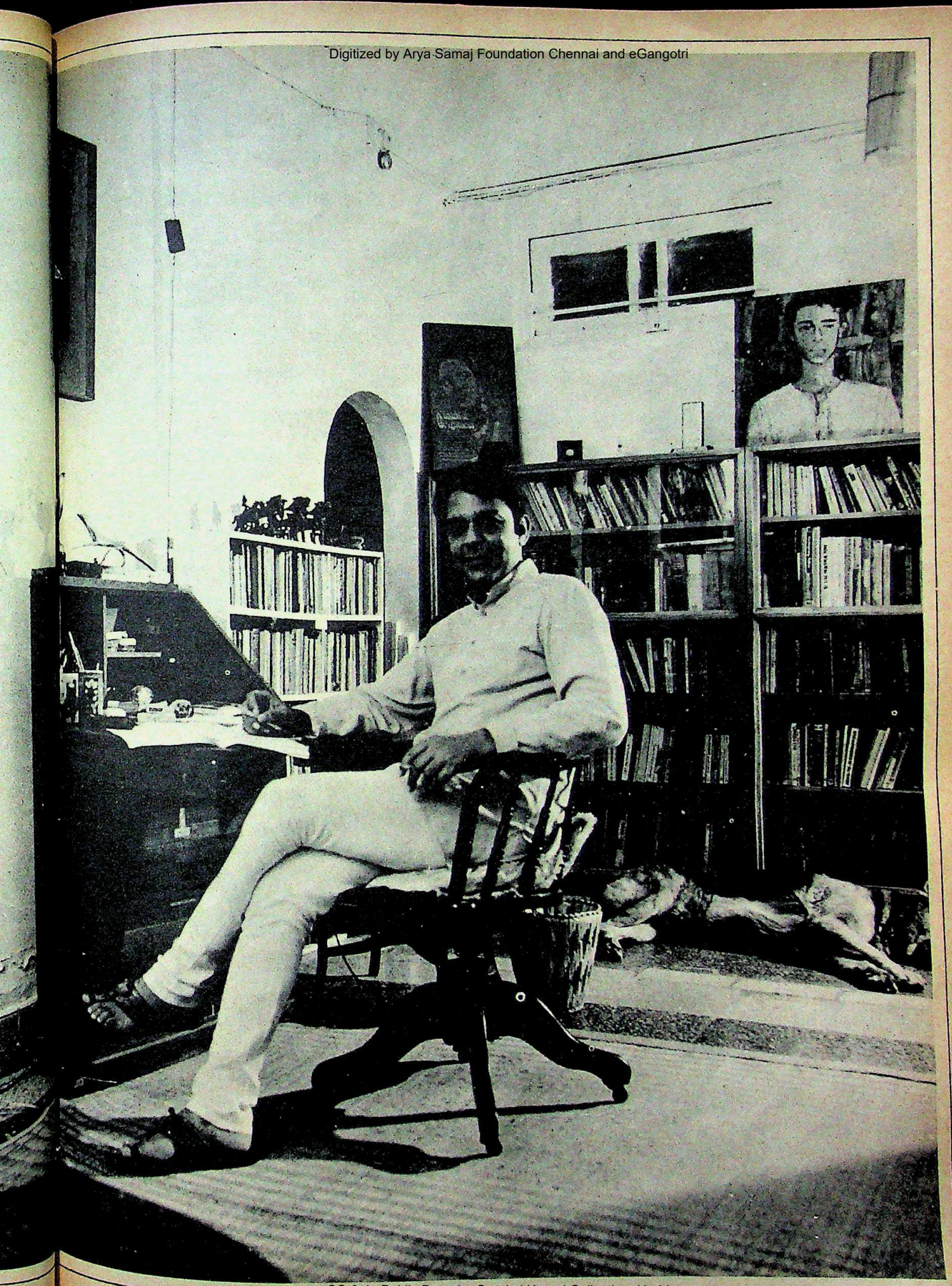

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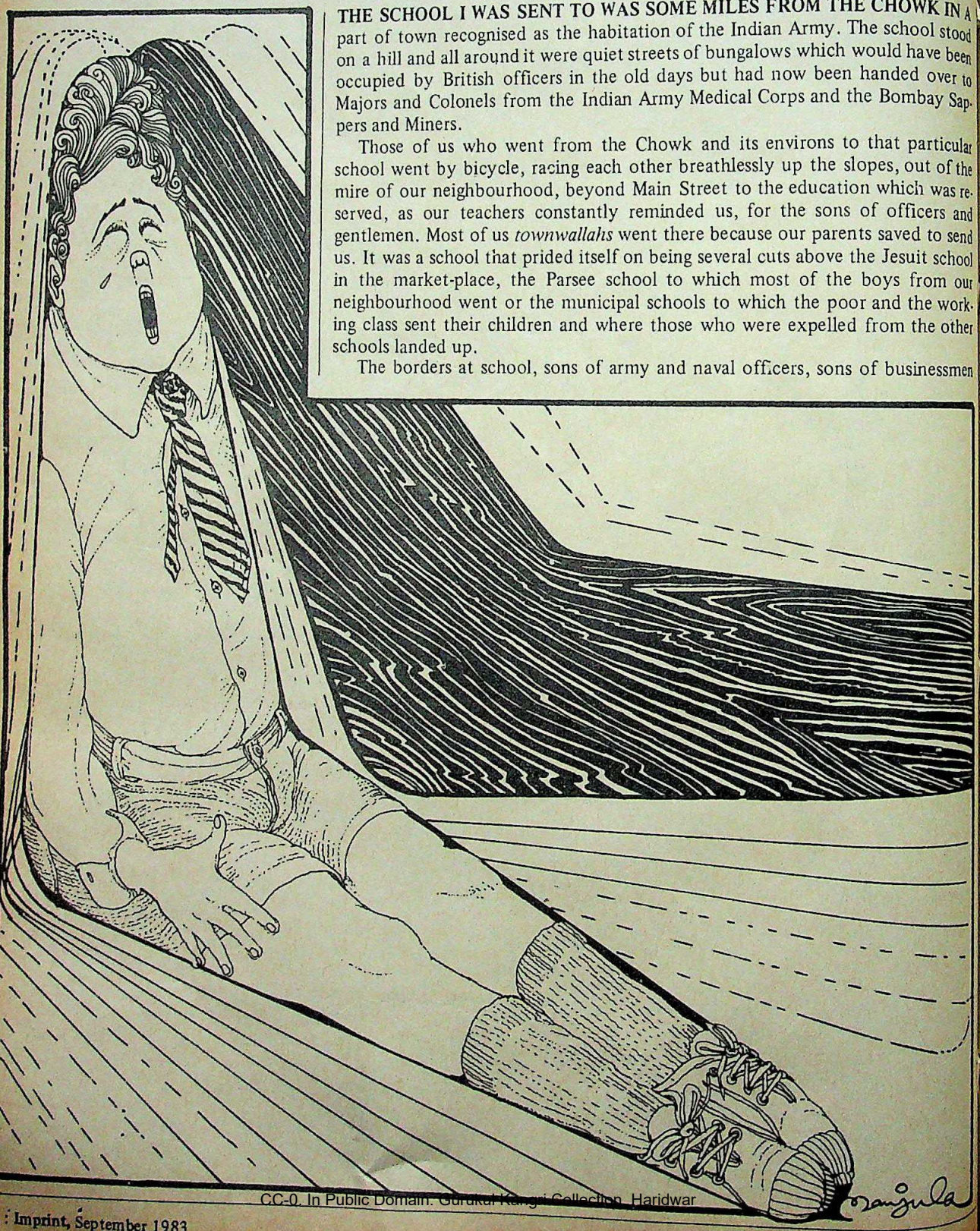
Fiction in imprint

BOOMERANG

By Farrukh Dhondy



THE SCHOOL I WAS SENT TO WAS SOME MILES FROM THE CHOWK IN A part of town recognised as the habitation of the Indian Army. The school stood on a hill and all around it were quiet streets of bungalows which would have been occupied by British officers in the old days but had now been handed over to Majors and Colonels from the Indian Army Medical Corps and the Bombay Sappers and Miners.

Those of us who went from the Chowk and its environs to that particular school went by bicycle, racing each other breathlessly up the slopes, out of the mire of our neighbourhood, beyond Main Street to the education which was reserved, as our teachers constantly reminded us, for the sons of officers and gentlemen. Most of us *townwallahs* went there because our parents saved to send us. It was a school that prided itself on being several cuts above the Jesuit school in the market-place, the Parsee school to which most of the boys from our neighbourhood went or the municipal schools to which the poor and the working class sent their children and where those who were expelled from the other schools landed up.

The borders at school, sons of army and naval officers, sons of businessmen

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from Bombay and civil servants from all over India, accepted that the bad food, the whippings, the unflagging concentration on running from one place to the next to build stamina, the dormitories which were old converted barracks and leaked in the monsoon, the ex-army British sergeants who had stayed behind in India to train us, were all parts of this character-building process.

The Headmaster didn't like the day scholars. We were tolerated because we brought in a certain amount of money, because we helped swell the numbers and mainly, I think, because some government regulation stipulated that a Poona school couldn't function without boys from Poona. He used to refer to us as 'the natives'. In his estimation we were just one rung above the people he referred to as 'bazaar urchins' and the 'blighted, benighted of India'. His knowledge, such as it was, was respected; his cane was feared. He was a sentimentalist who tried to inspire 'his boys' with a softness for silly traditions. Several times at assembly he would display a glass phial attached to his key chain and tell the school that it contained the mud of his 'alma mater', the school he had attended as a boy. He had gathered this memento from the path where his school mates had walked.

He was an enthusiast for religion and made us pray with our eyes shut and drilled us to sing hymns, the meanings of which were a greater puzzle to me than the prayers I said at home in the dead language of the Parsee scriptures. "*As pants the hart for cooling streams, When heated in the chase*," was to me like those funny cut-out transfers in which the head doesn't match the body, because the words didn't seem to fit together. I thought, till I was much older, that the lines had something ungrammatical to do with trousers and chests and fire and 'chase' suggested to me some kind of old stove.

Amongst those of us who came from the Chowk and the lowly neighbourhoods of the town, there was a tacit understanding, a rejection of 'character', 'tradition', 'discipline' and gentlemanliness. We had as much use for these as we had for test tubes of mud from the school drive. We lived a sort of double life, hanging about the Chowk in the evenings drinking single *chai*, shedding our maroon ties and white shirts, wandering about in gangs, bored. They had access to the scandal

Amongst those of us who came from the Chowk there was a tacit understanding, a rejection of 'character', 'tradition', 'discipline' and gentlemanliness.

shooting pigeons with deadly catapults or with .177 airguns, organising kite-flying tournaments, bicycling to the filthy river for a nocturnal swim. School seemed to prove that work was one thing and living another.

The boarders lived a dreary life with a pitiable routine. They were paraded for breakfast, paraded for lunch and dinner, paraded for baths and study and paraded to be inspected before they left school once a fortnight for a few hours to visit bounded precincts of the town. The Chowk was out of bounds for them. They could only descend as far as Main Street and could only go to the two English picture houses. Doom would follow if they ventured into the 'native' enclaves. Imposed by some Englishman who had headed the school, the rules were a sorry imitation of the law the Tommies lived by and defied when they were garrisoned in Poona.

Between the boarders and the day scholars there was constant rivalry. Each side had its own strengths. We had bicycles which they yearned to and dirty stories about the masters' wives. They were good at running and boxing and football and the best of them could probably beat the hell out of the best of us in hand to hand combat. But we had the knife men, the gang men, the boys who treated self-defence as a necessity of life rather than a sport. We also had access to new clothes and, most important of all, to food cooked at home.

TERRY SOAKUM WAS a boarder. He was a white boy and came to our class for the first time, ushered by an Anglo-Indian matron, in tears. His arrival caused a quickly quelled stir in the class. There was one other white boy at the school and there had been a third. This third was a Danish boy who spoke no English. He was the son, it was said, of a great Danish engineer who had come to Poona to set up the first penicillin factory in the suburb called Pimpri. This boy constantly smiled, was left alone by most others and came to school in a large chauffeur-driven car. He stayed a year, was of little account and disappeared when his father's expertise was no longer needed in the penicillin plant.

The other white boy was Kimber. He was the son of missionaries and had lived all his life in Poona. He behaved like the rest of us; he spoke English with our accent, he played and prayed and lied and scrapped. His only distinction was being called 'white-spunk' and wearing woollen hose, come hot summer, come monsoon, because his dad had picked up, through acquaintance with the jungle regions of India, the belief that they kept leeches off.

We gathered round the new arrival at break time. He sobbed silently as he was shown how to lock his desk and make up his time-table. Through his sobs and his wet eyes which stared at one spot, he made it known that he was from Australia, from Perth. He had cried all the way on the plane. We never thought of asking him how he'd landed up in Poona.

He was a curiosity to the rest of the school and crowds gathered to see him, as though a strange animal had been imported to the old zoo. He wasn't wearing school uniform and continued for the next few days in his blue velvet shorts and frilled silk shirt. He carried a painted boomerang with him and clutched on to it as though it was the one spar from a broken ship in the enveloping sea of the present.

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The boomerang became the centre of attention after Soakum's strange accent and clothes and manners lost their initial charm. It never performed in my sight, but word reached the gang I used to circulate with that Terry Soakum could ring the school bell with it.

Our school bell consisted of a piece of railway track about a yard in length, suspended from the rafters of the dinner hall verandah. Each year the tallest boarder in the eleventh standard was entrusted with the bell-ringer's job and given a large iron bolt as a sign and instrument of office. The bolt was rattled in the groove of the rail, producing a clang that reached the most remote classroom and games group. We heard now that Soakum could ring this bell from a distance of 30 yards and catch the wooden bird as it homed back to him.

On the fourth day that Soakum was there he was summoned to the presence of our gang. Its leader was Farokh Habibulla. He was the only boy who was 17 and was growing a moustache amongst the day scholars. The rest of us were 14 and 15. He was a veteran. He had spent three years in the tenth standard because he hadn't passed his exams. He was a weight-lifter. His muscles bulged out of rolled-up sleeves. He gave demonstrations of his strength by shaking the trunks of well-established trees and he always managed to speak, to teachers and to the rest of us, in a growl which seemed to come from way down in his guts.

"Send for the Australian," he said.

A couple of the gang went to seek out the Soakum circus, the jeering bunch of third and fourth standard tykes who followed Soakum around wherever he went. In a few minutes, Soakum was brought to us.

"I hope you like India," Farokh Habibulla said.

"I don't like the boys, they're not nice boys. In Australia. . ."

"In Australia people smell like sheep," Haby said.

"Tell him please, to let go of my arm. It hurts," Soakum shrieked. The gathering laughed.

Haby gave a vague signal with his eyebrows and Terry Soakum was released.

"All right, now give me that crooked stick."

"It's a boomerang."

"How much does it cost."

"You can't buy it in rupees. It costs pounds, shillings and pence."

For the first time we heard the cry that was to become famous in the school. Soakum's face turned red and rich tears dropped from his wide eyes.

"That's all right then. If I can't buy it I'll take it."

Haby stretched his hand out. Soakum quickly held the boomerang behind his back. Haby wiggled his fingers. Two boys detached themselves from our gang and prised the boomerang out of Soakum's fingers.

"My dad gave it to me," Soakum said. Haby was examining the shaft. It was varnished and the grain of the wood ran in a curved pattern around its angle. The boomerang had blue and yellow patterns painted on it.

"Can you make it come back if you throw it? I hear you're gassing too much about its comings and goings."

"He can't," some little boys shouted. "He can only polish it on his pants."

"I can make it come back," Haby said.

"You?" Soakum said with unconcealed contempt. "Only abos and bushrangers can use it properly."

"If I can, I'll keep it," Haby said.

He stepped out of the ring of boys and walked authoritatively to clear ground.

"You don't hold it like that," Soakum said.

Haby was holding the boomerang by its middle. He knew everyone was staring at him. He weighed the instrument like a man putting the shot. Then he held it at knee height.

"If it comes back, I'll keep it," Haby said.

"It won't come back for you," Soakum said.

Haby laughed and threw the boomerang vertically in the air. It hung for a moment like a seagull taking the current, and swooped back downward. Haby ran a few steps and caught it.

Everyone except Soakum laughed.

"It's mine now," Haby said. "I've proved the laws of nature."

"Give it back," Soakum said stepping forward to grapple with Farokh.

"Getting nasty, eh?" Haby said and holding the boomerang with both hands now he raised his knee and cracked it in two. He handed the pieces back to Soakum.

"Australians are all daft," he said.

Then for the first time we heard the cry that was to become famous in school. Soakum began howling. "Oooooooooooo," he sang out. His face turned red and rich tears dropped from his wide eyes.

Some people laughed and the smaller boys, feeling bold, kicked him from behind and ran away. I felt sorry for Soakum, but feeling sorry for people wasn't done in our school.

In the months that followed, the velvet-clad boy disappeared. Soakum's two sets of uniform cottons were issued to him and became tatty and ragged. His neat hair grew in tangled blond locks which the masters delighted in pulling when he gave the wrong answers, as he invariably did in class. The matron ordered that he have a crew cut. His shoes gave way to a pair of canvas sneakers from which his toes soon sprouted. He picked up the ways of the filthiest boarders and stuffed buttered buns from breakfast into his shirt when he could steal them. The butterfly had turned caterpillar.

The school got to know, when Soakum didn't pack his trunks as the rest of the boarders did the day before the holidays, that Australia was far away and worse, that Soakum's father had stopped sending money or fees to the school. Terry Soakum had been abandoned in India. After several unanswered letters, the Headmaster had

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sent Soakum to be interviewed by the Anglican mission which paid the school fees and pocket money of the very poor Christians.

At first Soakum cried and tried to hide the shame of being abandoned, but in a term's time he acquired the shamelessness of the very poor. He was flogged publicly at assembly three times for stealing the belongings of other boys in his dormitory. He began to be known as a '*chokrá* boy,' a street urchin, and lived up to the role by learning all the taunts and abuse that street urchins used. Soakum became the closest thing to an Indian derelict that a white boy could be.

He got a reputation for being a howler. At the end of each month the boys in all classes were given tests in each subject. The marks were added up and the sum divided to give each boy an average on his report card and a place and rank in class. At the end of the month the Headmaster visited each class in turn. His entry would be signalled by a flurry of activity and then complete silence. The black-gowned, cane-carrying figure would carefully pick up the register. The report cards would be handed round and then the names of those who had failed in the monthly tests would be read out.

The reward for each subject that a boy failed was one cut of the cane on the bum. In the junior classes the beating was handed out in front of the class. After the ninth standard, when most of the boys were 14, the failures were invited by the Headmaster to form a queue outside the classroom on the verandah. He would step outside and call the names one by one and the thrashings would follow. The boys who had passed would sit tight and silent and listen and thank God for brains or concentration or whatever it was that caused them to know the date of the second battle of Panipat or the real name of Gautam the Buddha.

Soakum was always left till last, because the Headmaster knew that beating him would disrupt the sequence. He would start screaming before the cane hit him, his dread mounting as the queue in front got shorter. He used to fail ten subjects at a time, bettering Habibulla who usually managed to fail six or seven.

Haby would be second to last in the queue.

He would bend down, take his strokes motionless and raise his head to ask the Head if he was finished.

The one thing that took some of the pain away was the interest that the others showed in your bottom after a severe beating.

He'd get two more for insolence.

Haby would stroll back into class, pretending to clean his teeth with his tongue, a device which allowed him to disguise the fact that his mouth was contorted with pain and determination not to show it. Then Soakum would begin howling in earnest, "Ooooooooooo", shrill and unashamed.

"You mustn't show the bastard you're scared of his stick," Haby would advise us. "Day scholars must show they are as tough as these leather-eating boarders."

It was difficult to follow his advice. The pain was compelling. On the occasions when I got three cuts for bringing raw mangoes to school, or for being seen with a mob of my friends, barefoot in Sachapir Street, I had to fight myself to keep the tears back. Blinking fast always helped, though it betrayed the straight face you were trying to keep, and rubbing your mouth so that the rest couldn't see the corners curling downwards. Whenever I got beaten, I reminded myself that I mustn't be like Soakum. He was the symbol of cowardice in the school.

The one thing that took some of the pain away was the interest that the others showed in your bottom after a severe beating.

"Give us a look, let's have a look."

You'd take your trousers down and bend for all to see. They'd pass their fingers along the ridged cuts.

"It's gone yellow, yar. Ooophh. Look at this men, purple."

No one wanted to see Soakum's bum. After a beating he ran around the school grounds clutching it, howling and running in circles like a rabid dog. The teachers were used to it. They gave up demanding that he came back and sat down like the rest of the disgraced rascals. Yet it was a game to remind Soakum of the beating the next day and make him crane his neck to look over his shoulder, standing on tip-toe to examine his own backside. Sometimes the memory of it would revive his howl.

Through being a coward, Soakum turned into a bully. The frightened long to inspire fear and feed off the inspiration. Two years at our school had taught him that the best way to acquire the possessions he wanted was not to steal them from his fellow seniors, but to take them from smaller and younger boys. He used to force third standard boys to go to secluded parts of the playground with him and exchange their socks for his torn ones. He extracted shares of melon slice and coconut toffee from them. He borrowed hockey sticks by beating their owners with them. It was known that he picked on the weak and the weedy and the defenceless.

I didn't think of myself as either of these and was mortified when he picked on me. I was the second smallest boy in the class. The smallest had a younger brother who was one year behind but already five foot six inches tall. They were both boarders and lived in the same dormitory and no one harassed them. I was conscious from the day I joined that class that I wore the thickest spectacles, and had the knobbliest knees which the rest laughed at when I was asked to climb ropes in PT classes. In the early years I was used to being called 'four-eyes' but now when the boys of Sarbatwalla Chowk began to gang together, I felt a certain amount of security from membership of Haby's gang.

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SOAKUM WAS AFTER my swimming trunks. On the mornings when we had swimming, we wore our trunks under our trousers or shorts and sat in them through the lessons till it was time to go. The class would be dismissed and told to get to the baths as fast as possible. The day scholars would get on their bicycles and race each other to the pool which was a quarter of a mile away and the boarders would begin their run to be the first there. There was constant competition to be the first in the pool, so as you cycled along or ran, you began stripping yourself of your shirt and, if you could manage it, your trousers.

As the race for the pool began that day, I was the last to get my bike out of the shed and get started. As I was going through the school gate I passed Soakum. He got hold of the book carrier of my bike.

"Give us a double seat, man."

"No, no. Why can't you run like all the other boarders?"

"Don't be such a skunk. Give us a *cha-nus*."

Soakum jumped on to the back carrier. I heard his breath and felt his weight pull the bicycle to a halt.

"Come on, Dhondy. What's the matter with you, are you a TB patient?"

"I'm no good at double seat, yar. Police will catch us, then who'll pay the fine?"

The bike had moved a few yards and it began to veer from side to side through loss of momentum.

"Soakum get off, or I'll kick you."

"Don't fart in my face," he said. "If you've got lung trouble, I'll take you doubles."

"No, it's my bike."

Soakum got off the bike and grabbed the back of the seat with both hands. It was no good trying to get away. The others were out of sight now. I decided to let him try to carry me.

Soakum got on to the seat and I got on the carrier. He puffed and panted, standing on the pedals to force them down.

"Is this an Indian-make bike?"

"I'll give you a little *dhhukka*," I said, pushing the ground with my feet.

We moved off slowly. We were going to be the last in the pool and the rest of the class would jeer. I unrolled my towel and hung it round my neck and began to get my shirt off. At least I would be in the pool before Soakum. He was panting and struggling up the hill now. I unbuttoned my shorts and was going through the gymnastics of taking them off by sliding them under me, when Soakum swerved.

If the teacher hadn't been there I would have got him by the neck. I was mad. The stone hadn't hit me hard but I was smarting from the insult.

"What are you doing, yar, you're making me lose balance."

The bike careened sideways and we both landed in the gutter.

"Look what you've done to the bike," I said, and stood up, my shorts almost falling off. The handle-bars of the bike were twisted. Soakum wasn't paying any attention. He was staring at my new trunks.

"I say, can I have those? I'll give you my trunks."

"You off your head or what? My uncle got them from Hong Kong."

"I think you'd better take them off and give them to me," Soakum said, rising from the ditch and standing over me as I got the front wheel of the bike and tried to pull the handle-bars straight.

"I'll give you my new catty."

"I don't want your catty," I said.

He took the catapult out of his shirt.

"Look at this leather on it, it's special leather, made from rhinoceros balls."

"Don't talk bunk, yar. I told you I don't want your catty."

"All right then, I'll break your teeth," he said and grabbed me by the shirt. "Take off those swimmies."

"Get off," I shouted and pushed him away.

Soakum picked up a stone from the side of the road.

"You want your specs bashed into your skull? Filthy four-eyes."

"I'm not scared of you," I replied, trying to get my bicycle between him and me.

I bent down and picked up a stone too.

"OK, no stones, man," he said and dropped the one he was holding. He scowled and came right up to me. He gritted his teeth and made an ugly face and as I stared at it he pinched me on the thigh.

I pushed my elbow in his neck and he released his hold. Then he grabbed the towel from round my neck and began to run up the road.

I got on the bike and chased him. As he got to the gate of the swimming pool he picked up a stone and hurled it at me. It hit me in the chest. I was furious. I threw my bike down and chased him to the side of the pool. Then he threw my towel into the water.

"Now you can't swim either," he said.

If the teacher hadn't been there I would have got him by the neck. I was mad. The stone hadn't hit me hard, but I was smarting from the insult. Very few boys had ever had cause to challenge me to fight. I had fought once or twice in the junior classes and emerged with my clothes torn. But this was Soakum, the biggest cry-baby in the school. The rest of them had seen him throw my towel in the pool. He would go around telling the boarders that he had beaten me up. Hadn't he the sense to know that I was part of a tough gang? Of course I didn't want the protection of the gang. I had to fight this out myself. But how could I tell Haby and the rest of my friends that I wanted to fight Soakum? They'd laugh. Soakum was someone you rapped on the head, not challenged to a fight.

When we queued up after swimming I made my way next to him.

"I'll give you a kicking," I said in a whisper.

"Come to the lowers after school."

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he said. "And bring your knife. I don't fight day scholars without a knife."

On the way back to school I stuck with the Sarbatwalla Chowk crowd.

"Why didn't you swim?" Haby asked me.

"That bugger Soakum, he threw my towel in the pool."

"Soakum? You let him touch your towel? You'll get a disease."

"I'm going to fight him."

"I'll give him one backhander and he'll go flying," Haby said.

"I'm going to kill him myself," I said.

"When?"

"After school today. On the lowers. He said to bring a knife. I don't have a knife."

"Look, have this one," one of the others said and he pulled a switchblade from his pocket. I couldn't refuse it now. I weighed it in my palm.

This thing was getting out of hand. I had never used a knife before, though I had heard fights discussed a hundred times on the Chowk. Kolmi used to tell the story of how Thomas the Boxer was knifed one procession night and how his guts lay in the street from the gash which had gone in and up and how you could see that he had eaten rice and yoghurt for dinner.

I looked at the switchblade and turned it in my hand and tried it once or twice. I was wishing the fight wasn't anything to do with knives. I knew that if I struck out blindly with my elbow or my fist, Soakum would start howling even before I touched him. If he started that, fighting him would bring disgrace, but less disgrace than backing away from a quarrel with him would. I had to go through with it.

"Boarders never use knives," Haby said. He looked meditative. "Why didn't you just ask him to punch for punch?"

"Whatever he wants," I said.

I wasn't concentrating on my afternoon lessons. Soakum sat six desks behind me. I could sense his gaze on my neck. Knife fights needed skill, not strength. Anyone could win. I wasn't going to admit to myself that I was scared, but a rush of blood under my ears and a looseness about my wrists told me I was certainly *something*. At the change of lessons an unusual silence came over the class. The maths teacher came in.

He was a middle-aged Anglo-Indian man. Like the other teachers he carried a cane in his armpit. He began each lesson by going through the drill of times tables with the class. "Shix shix-teens," he would say with his peculiar lisp and point his cane at a boy who would have to answer. If the answer was correct, he'd move to the next boy.

I wasn't concentrating on my afternoon lessons. Soakum sat six desks behind me. I could sense his gaze on my neck. Knife fights needed skill.

"Shoakum. Nine shevens?" he asked.

Soakum was also in a daze.

"What?"

"I'll give you what! Nine shevens?"

"Uh, fifty-six."

It was the sort of opportunity the maths teacher was always waiting for. He tucked his cane back in his armpit, and as if inviting the class to relish this absurdity with him, he began to pace up and down.

"Shoakum sheems to shay that nine shevens are fifty-shix. *Fif*ty-shix. *Fif-tee* shix."

"Seventy-nine," Soakum said.

It was too late to change his mind. The maths teacher was revelling in it.

"Fifty-shix."

"Eighty-five."

"*Fifty*-shix."

"Seventy-seven. Thirty-nine. Forty-eight." Soakum was getting frantic. "What is it? What is it?" he asked in an audible whisper.

"Say a hundred and five," Haby growled.

"A hundred and five," Soakum shouted.

"Say a hundred and one," someone said.

"Shoakum shays, nine shevens are *fif-ty*-six." The master's pace picked up momentum. It was still deliberate, sadistic.

"Forty-nine. A hundred and forty-four. Sixty-eight," Soakum screamed.

"Fifty-shix."

The cane came out of the armpit and down on to Soakum's shoulder then across his face and down on the

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arms he held up to protect himself.

"Twenty too. . .ooooooooooooo," came Soakum's full-throated siren wail. "They told me, sir, they gave me the wrong answers."

"I'll give you fifty-shix. I'll shee to your wrong anshers, you dishgrashe to Aushtralian manhood, you shquirming *chokrawallah*."

Soakum ran out of the class as soon as the stick permitted him to. The master ignored his flight and went on with fractions on the board. When the bell rang for the end of school, Farokh Habibulla came up to my desk.

"Are you going to the lowers Farrukh?"

"I'm going," I said. "Will you come and hold my specs?"

As I had expected a crowd gathered. Word had got round school that there was to be a fight to the death.

I was sweating. Soakum wasn't there. Then the cry went up, "Soakum's coming."

Sure enough, he was coming, but he was coming in the company of the Headmaster. There was a general scurry. Boys began to run to left and right. Fighting on the lowers was prohibited and spectators if caught were thrashed before participants were, for encouraging fights.

The crowd broke and ran and I stood there like an idiot for a moment or two looking at the knife in my hand. Then I ran too.

"Dhondy," the Head's voice boomed out from behind me. I stopped. The game was up. Soakum stood next to the Head wiping his nose on his sleeve.

"What were you here for?"

"Fight, sir."

"You were going to fight Soakum?"

"Yes sir."

"You were going to settle your differences like gentlemen through a duel?"

"Yes sir."

"Where are the gloves? Have your seconds run off with them?"

I didn't answer.

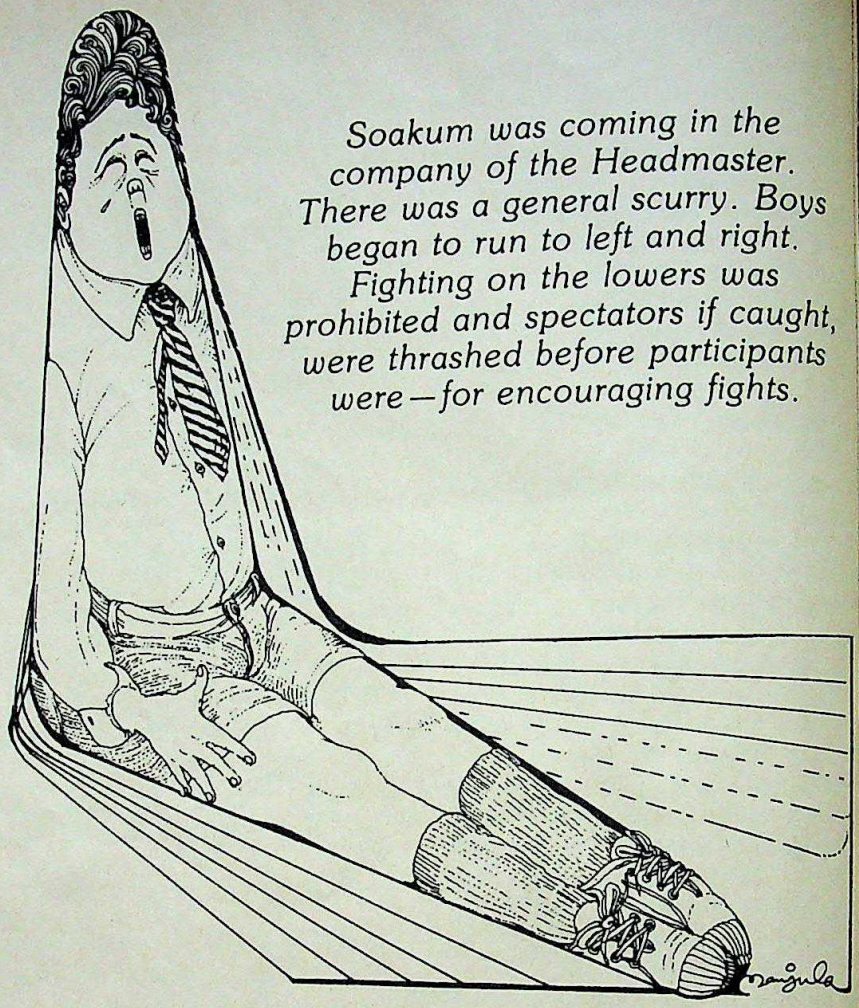
"Bare fists? Like hooligans, eh?"

Again I said nothing.

"Turn out your pockets, lad. I've heard some very serious allegations."

I did as I was told. Out came my keys, two pencils, a pack of chewing gum, a couple of marbles, a piece of plastic carving and the switchknife.

"You day scholars can't fight like gentlemen can you? Soakum told me he suspected you would bring a knife. He was prepared to have it out like a man, but you had to bring your dirty bazaar tricks into it, didn't you Dhondy?"



Soakum was coming in the company of the Headmaster. There was a general scurry. Boys began to run to left and right. Fighting on the lowers was prohibited and spectators if caught, were thrashed before participants were—for encouraging fights.

Soakum stood behind the Head, a faint grin on his face.

"But he. . ." I couldn't go any further.

Both Soakum and I were presented on stage to the school the next day at assembly, standing at ease, our hands clutched behind our backs.

"These boys chose to fight yesterday. One is a day scholar, one is a boarder. Both of them get the stick. One of them is a coward and the other is a sneak. Neither of these weaknesses is going to be tolerated in this school. They're not *pukka* . . ."

I held my knees as the cane came down and my knuckles turned white. I clutched tight and thought 'As pants the hart for cooling streams' and tried to distract my mind with figuring it out. I caught the eyes of the eleventh standard at the back of the assembly as I rubbed my backside and took my position next to Soakum. Farokh Habibullah nodded at me and smiled.

Soakum howled but this time no one so much as smirked.

The incident wasn't mentioned again.

Soakum acquired a new pair of swimming trunks from no one knew where. He never bothered me again and in a few weeks we were on trading if not talking terms again.

When I returned to India after being in another country, having finished school and done with college and worked abroad for several years, I met Farokh Habibulla on the Chowk again. We talked of old times. He was in business. I was a schoolteacher. We laughed together.

"And what happened to Soakum, he didn't pass his exams did he?"

"Oh God, you won't believe this," Farokh said. "It was in the newspapers. He went back to Australia after school and you know what job he got?"

"Repairing boomerangs?"

"No, Farrukh. He became a professional boxer. He was fighting for the lightweight title in Melbourne last month."

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YETIS, BEARS AND MORE

Strange tales from the hills.

STORIES ABOUT THE Yeti, or Abominable Snowman, always make good copy for newspapers and from time to time we are treated to photographs of giant footprints—the owners of these footprints never staying around long enough to be photographed in their entirety! Fully equipped expeditions have gone out in search of this creature, while so-called Yeti scalps have been taken abroad for scientific examination and famous personalities have clashed over the question of whether the Snowman is myth or reality.

All this fuss about a Snowman would seem to have obscured the fact that there is also an Abominable Snow*woman*, as well-known to the Nepalese (who call her the Lidini) as the Yeti is to the Tibetans.

The Lidini, like the Yeti, is said to be heavy and long-haired. She differs in that her feet are turned in the usual direction and not inward like the Yeti's. She has been known to attack on sight and one can only escape from her by running downhill, because the Lidini's progress is slowed down by her huge body and the long hair that covers her eyes. This should be remembered by anyone setting out in search of a Snowwoman. If you meet her and try running uphill, she will soon overtake you (she is very fast going uphill) and then you will be at the mercy of her long nails and sharp teeth.

The husband of the Lidini, known as the Banjakhiri, is said to be gifted with supernatural powers. Waking at dawn, he leaves his forest lair for a large cave in the mountains which he has converted into a shrine. Unlike his wife he does not attack humans with intent to kill, but is said to entirely ignore grown-ups, preferring to capture children, whom he hides in his long hair. He takes the children to his cave-shrine, where he looks after them very carefully, feeding them on fruit, rice and earthworms.

The Banjakhiri has a great school where he teaches children black magic. So careful is he in choosing his disciples that only children of the highest intelligence are captured by him. When the youngsters are fully versed in magic, they are taken back to where they were captured and then sent out into the world to practise their magic on humanity. Our modern generation could possibly learn a few things from the Banjakhiri's methods.

There is another couple said to live in the forests of the higher Himalayas: the Sagpa and Sagpani.

In appearance they resemble the Banjakhiri and Lindini, but they are much smaller. They too are said to attack on sight; but beyond the desire to capture people and eat them, their greatest ambition is to sleep as much as possible. You are therefore quite safe if you allow them to sleep undisturbed; but, if you wake them, they become very ferocious and do not give you much time in which to start running uphill or downhill. But as a rule the Sagpanis avoid human habitation and are only to be found in the very heart of the great oak and rhododendron forests.

Then there are the Kasundas—wild, curly-headed creatures, usually seen at great heights above the snow-line. Nobody has got close to a Kasunda. There is a story that one of Genghis Khan's soldiers caught one in Tibet. Finding it to be of an imitative disposition, the soldier gave it a tin containing kerosene oil (yes, Genghis Khan was into oil exploration too!) while he himself filled a similar tin with water. The soldier poured the water over his own head, and the Kasunda immediately imitated his action, pouring the oil over itself. The soldier then took a box of matches and giving a match to the Kasunda, lit one himself and pretended to set fire to his clothes. The Kasunda immediately did the same, set his curly hair on fire and went up in smoke.

Since then, the Kasundas have kept well away from the haunts of men. And who can blame them?

* * *

Ruskin Bond is a former Managing Editor of Imprint. *This is a regular column.*

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Options-Nature

I HAVE NEVER had the pleasure of fleeing from an Abominable Snowwoman, but I have fled from the next best thing, a Himalayan bear and I ran away from it on the same principle, that bears run faster uphill than downhill. Naturally I ran downhill. It is quite possible that bears run equally fast in all directions, but I have never stopped to find out, nor do I know of any shikari or zoologist who has taken out his stop-watch while being chased by a bear.

Himalayan bears like pumpkins, maize, plums and apricots, a diet that obviously does their figures a world of good. And of course they are very fond of honey. Once, while I was sitting in an oak tree near Lansdowne (in Pauri-Garhwal), hoping to see a pair of pine-martens living nearby, I heard the whining 'grumble' of a bear, and presently saw a young bear amble into the clearing near the tree. As he was quite young and had no malicious intent, I did not panic and run, but remained in my oak tree.

At first the bear put his nose to the ground and sniffed his way along until he came to a large anthill. Here he began huffing and puffing, blowing rapidly in and out of his nostrils, so that the dust from the anthill flew in all directions. But he was a disappointed bear, because the anthill had been deserted long before. And so, grumbling, he made his way to a wild plum tree. Shinning rapidly up the smooth trunk, he was soon perched in the topmost branches. It was only then that he saw me.

He at once scrambled several feet higher up the tree and laid himself out flat on a branch. It wasn't a very thick branch and left a large expanse of bear showing on either side. He tucked his head away behind another branch and, so long as he could not see me, was satisfied that he was well hidden, though he couldn't help grumbling with anxiety.

But, like all bears, he was full of curiosity. And slowly, inch by inch, his black snout appeared over the edge of the branch. As soon as his eyes came into view and met mine, he drew his head back with a jerk and hid his face.

He did this several times. I waited until he wasn't looking, then moved some way down the tree. When he looked up again and saw that I was missing, he was so pleased that he stretched right across to another branch and helped himself to a plum. I couldn't help bursting into laughter and this so startled him that he tumbled out of the tree, dropped through the branches for some 15 feet and landed with a thud in a heap of dry leaves. He was quite unhurt but ran squealing with fright.

I have yet to see an Abominable Snowman or Snowwoman, Sagpa or Sagpani, Lidini or Banjakhiri but if I ever come across one of the lot, I suppose they will treat me with the same humble curiosity and deference.

— *Ruskin Bond*

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THE BODY PRIMER—PART II

Is exercise the only way to lose weight?

IN THE MAJOR new book published earlier this year, British journalist Geoffrey Cannon tells of his attempts to lose weight. He tried every diet there was and sure enough, every one of them, worked. Each time, he embarked on a diet, his waistline would shrink, his trousers sag and his figure take on a new, slender look.

The point, of course, was that the weight loss would never last. After a few weeks of starvation, Cannon's body would resemble a sylph's, but once he returned to his normal eating pattern, the weight would miraculously re-appear. Last month, *The Body Primer* considered the mechanics of weight loss and explained why this should be so.

Cannon says that he finally found a solution: he began to jog. Anybody familiar with the standard calorie-counting methods of losing weight will find this mystifying. As is well-known, if after four rounds of your cricket field, you return to a well-deserved feast of a few toasts with butter and jam, you'll have made up in calories for those you lost while running round the field. So how can exercise be the solution?

Cannon has an answer. According to him, exercise works in two ways. First of all, it speeds up your metabolic rate. A faster metabolic rate means that the body uses up energy quicker. Moreover, argues Cannon, if you exercise regularly, your metabolic rate will quicken for all time, not just for the half hour or so of exercise.

Secondly, Cannon claims, the body reacts to a diet as it would to a famine situation. It slows down its metabolic rate, becomes less active and when no nourishment is forthcoming begins burning up precious tissue, not fat, which it regards as an energy source for the rest of the famine.

Now, says Cannon, were you to exercise, this would not happen. Your metabolic rate would go up and not down, the body wouldn't be allowed to become less active and when it did have to find alternative energy sources, it would burn up fat, not lean tissue which it needs to maintain its active lifestyle.

Cannon's conclusion is that dieting makes you fat and that exercise makes you thin for all of the above reasons.

While the book has acquired popularity in the UK (*The Sunday Times* carried excerpts), the medical establishment has reacted with a certain amount of scorn and disbelief. Many doctors dispute the claim that exercise can make your metabolic rate go up even when you are not actually engaging in some form of strenuous physical activity. And others claim that the famine situation scenario that Cannon envisages is far from established. Some sceptics have even suggested that the whole thing is a plant on the part of the exercise industry!

Whether one accepts the entire Cannon hypothesis, there can be no denying the value of exercise as a means of losing weight. Obviously, if you follow a game of squash with several plates of *biryani*, the squash will have been of little use as a means of weight loss. But it now seems clear that any weight lost as a result of a diet will soon return unless the diet is accompanied by exercise.

What kind of exercise? Doctors usually speak of strenuous physical activity, secure in the knowledge that the average, middle-aged city dweller with a paunch, will not find the time to run six miles a day. When no weight loss results, they at once point out that their patients haven't run as much as they were supposed to.

The advantage of Cannon's prescription is that the amount of exercise does not really matter. If you jog for about ten minutes a day, or even run on the same spot for about a quarter of an hour each morning, this should be enough to speed your metabolism up and keep the body burning excess fat.

There are those who believe that even this prescription holds out no guarantee of success. Recent research in Britain suggests that some of the reasons for putting on weight may be genetic. In which case, the value of dieting and exercise is limited.

Another explanation suggests that the reasons are bio-chemical and that to achieve a lasting weight-loss, one must forget about the fad diets.

And a third has it that the only way to stay slim is to change your diet habits for all time.

It is the third explanation that probably holds out the best hope of a lasting weight loss for all time.

British researchers feel that the healthiest diet in the world is that consumed by a Japanese peasant—a little fish and rice. They believe that were the rest of the world to switch to this kind of diet, obesity and other weight-related ailments might well disappear from the face of the earth. ♦

NEXT MONTH:
STAYING SLIM AND HEALTHY.

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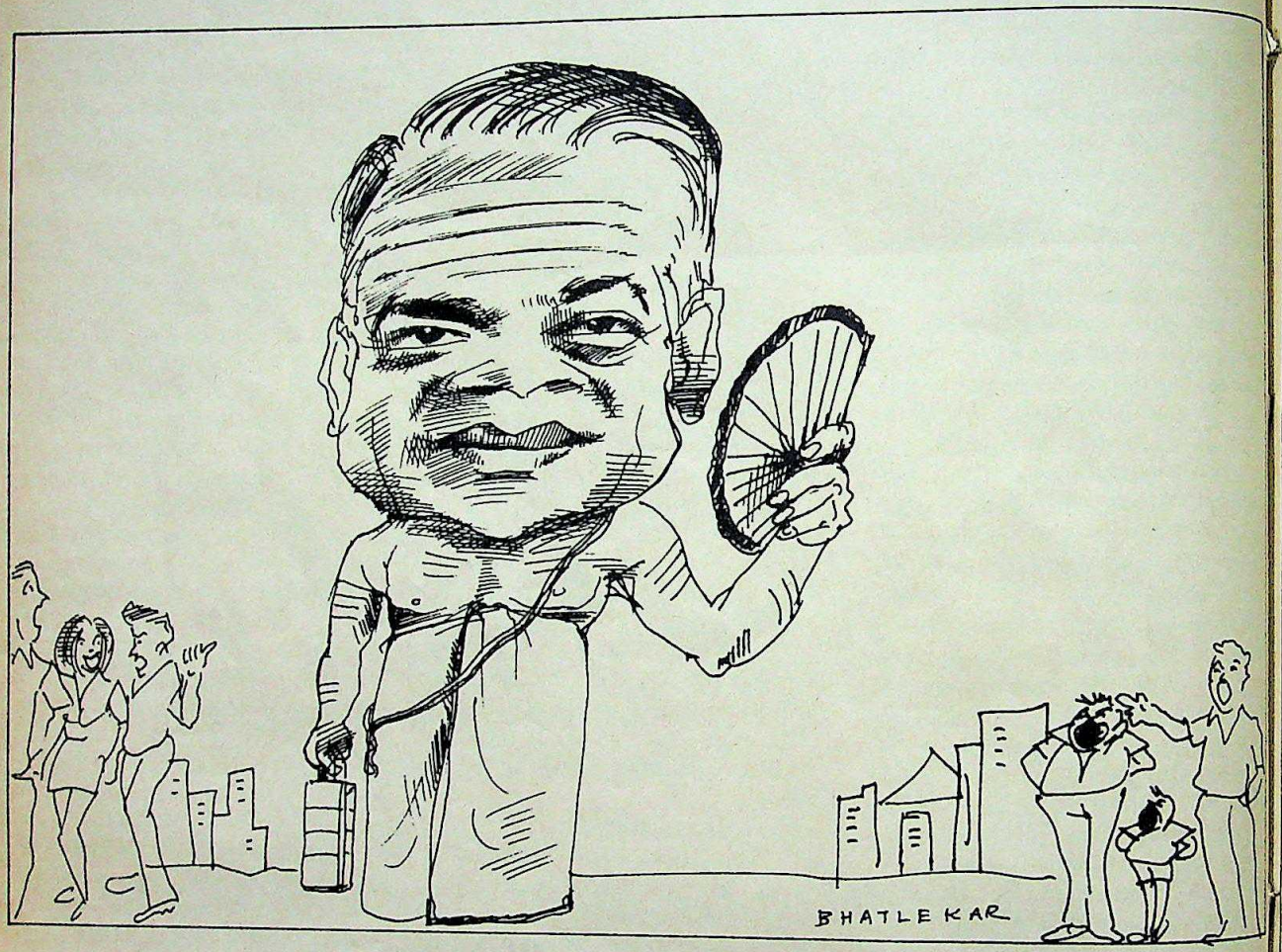
ON BEING A MADRASSI

MV Kamath takes North Indians to task.



THERE ARE TWO things that have never ceased to fascinate me about my fellow countrymen. One is their abysmal ignorance of geography and people; the other is the feeling of superiority each caste or religious group has over the rest.

I have a friend who constantly speaks of *bhuka* brahmins—brahmins who are perpetually hungry and beg for food. In my friend's rather open-hearted thinking, all brahmins are beggars. The explanation is given that in Punjab, brahmins are second class citizens, barely tolerated by the high-class *khatris*.

Happily, my friend has never lived in the South where brahmins have their own sense of superiority and would probably have some unkind things to say about *khatris* or whosoever. All of us seem to be in need of some prop to keep our clan egos in good order.

But the inter-caste tensions are nothing when compared to the collective contempt the people speaking the so-called Indo-Aryan languages have for those speaking the languages of the South. These are dubbed as *Madrassis* or people from Madras which, to the best of my knowledge, is a medium-sized city on the east coast and whose people are probably one of the most civilised in the country.

The *Madrassi* in Bombay is anyone who does not speak either Marathi, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali or Oriya. This constantly amuses my Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam and Tulu-speaking friends most of whom have never been to Madras.

There was a time when my *Madrassi* friends would get very hot under the collar when addressed as such. Today they are not bothered. They look down with bemused wonder at the colossal ignorance of their fellow countrymen. That ignorance is not just among the uneducated lower middle classes. It extends to the upper echelons of non-*Madrassi* society. I have heard a distinguished Public Prosecutor in the city refer to a very well-known Ayyangar brahmin as 'this *Madrassi*'.

Most of the non-*Madrassis*—if I am permitted to coin a word—are not dim-witted though they often behave like them. They are reasonably educated

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people, some of whom have had their 'education' abroad and can speak with reasonable assurance about the prostitutes in Paris and the masseurs of Bangkok. It is just that they are culturally maladjusted people who find themselves uncomfortable except among others who belong to their own milieu.

They are apparently people who suffer from a colossal inferiority complex, for only those who feel emotionally or intellectually insecure want the comfort of looking down on others.

Around the turn of the century, as Bombay got on to the first rungs of being a commercial metropolis the need was felt by a burgeoning trading class for young people with a clear knowledge of English. The lacuna was filled by a growing petit bourgeois that came from what was then the Presidency of Madras and which had had the advantage of a liberal English education. The then Presidency of Madras was a sprawling state that included some Telugu-speaking districts, many Tamil-speaking districts, the district of Malabar which had Malayalam as its court language and the district of South Kanara where people spoke a multitude of languages (Konkani, Tulu) but whose court language was Kannada. Since they all were part of the Presidency of Madras, they were dubbed *Madrassis*, for want of a better definition.

The *Madrassi* clerk was efficient, loyal, respectful and frugal and above all hard-working and soon no office in Bombay was without its quota of the *Madrassi* stenographer, clerk, accountant and manager. It did not matter that one spoke Telugu and was very proud of his Andhra heritage, that another spoke Tamil and had a tradition of literature, music, dance and sculpture or a third spoke Kannada with as rich a cultural background as any—if not, probably richer. It seemed, for a while, that the *Madrassi* enjoyed a monopoly of jobs which, in turn, was to first arouse envy, then jealousy, then hatred and finally contempt, among non-*Madrassis*.

The *Madrassi*, again, brought with him his culinary talents and soon Bombay city was being freely dotted by *Madrassi* restaurants, otherwise known as Udipi restaurants, a generic title bestowed on almost any restaurant that provides *idli* and *sambhar* and *masala dosai* as the staple on the menu card. Even the success of the entrepreneurs was once the cause of much heartburn against the so-called *Madrassis*.

Unable to meet the competition offered by the *Madrassi*, the non-*Madrassi* could only express his frustration by making derogatory remarks about those whose language was of 'Dravidian' origin. "What is it they talk, *randu mundu*?" would be the way Telugu, Kannada, Tamil or Malayalam would be referred to.

The 'Dravidians' being a civilised people knew better than to speak derogatorily or condescendingly about others. Their sense of culture gave them a feeling for other languages they cherished. I have never heard any *Madrassi* make any derogatory reference to any other linguistic or cultural group, neither in Bombay, nor in Madras, Bangalore, Cochin or Vijayawada. More Tamilians and Malayalis and Kannadigas are probably conversant with Marathi and Hindi than Maharashtrians and certainly Hindi-speaking people with Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada. Tamilians, Malayalis and Kannadigas, it seems to me are aware of their intrinsic worth and have no hang-ups. A people with the kind of past such as they have are in no need of props to sustain their ego.

My friends, especially in Bombay, find themselves at sea in trying to place me in their scale of values. My mother tongue is Konkani which is spoken in its many musical accents from Malabar in the south to Thane in the north. It is the major language of Goa. It is the mother tongue of a large number of people including PL Deshpande and AR Antulay. Many of these gentlemen are ashamed to admit the fact that their mother tongue is Konkani.

At a friend's house I was once counting aloud in Konkani and my friend's daughter asked: "Uncle, in what language are you counting?"

"Konkani," I replied.

"It sounds funny," she said. Ah, the honesty of the young. I should have said: "*Madrassi*."

Whenever I am asked what I am I say that I am a *Madrassi*. But you don't speak *randu mundu*? "Ah," I tell my friends, "but you haven't heard me yet!"

The more charitable among my friends, anxious to absolve me of being among the more despicable, would say: "But you *really* aren't a *Madrassi*, are you? You don't sound like one!" I assure them: "I am *really* and truly a *Madrassi*. My father was one. So to the best of my knowledge, was my grandfather and great grandfather. . ." They nod their heads sadly. My father was one of the first graduates from the Madras Christian College and a great favourite of Principal Miller. As a Fellow of the Madras University in his time, I think of him as a very proper *Madrassi*. But how can I convince my very superior friends that I am not lying? I can see them feeling very sorry for me. "Fancy Kamath being a *Madrassi*? Poor fellow."

I don't know which is worse: being a '*bhuka* brahmin' in the eyes of my Punjabi friends or a *Madrassi* in the eyes of my Maharashtrian, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali and other North Indian friends. Rather than bear the thought of having inadvertently made friends with me, one friend has decided to call me an American brahmin, a nondescript status meant to elevate me, if only slightly, above the sad ranks of *bhuka* brahmins and *Madrassis*. My insistence that I am content with my lowly status and am not in need of elevation falls on deaf ears. After all, they have *their* self-respect to defend, even if I have none. How can they ever be seen in the company of a *Madrassi*? I see their point. And it is a very valid point, too. In fact, I have great sympathy for my Punjabi and other friends who have to put up with me. I am a major cross for them to bear. They seem to say: "If only he weren't a cussed *Madrassi*, it would be so much easier for us all." I know, I know. My Maharashtrian friends are equally anxious to raise my status in their eyes and are willing to forgive me for having Konkani-speaking Brahmin parents, if only I'll recant. But I cannot. I am arrogant, too. And what can be lower in the ranks of animal and vegetable kingdoms than an arrogant *Madrassi* *bhuka* brahmin? ♦

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Vasant Gangavane: The Prodigal Returns

By Ashok Gopal

Ten years ago he was the bright hope of the Wharton's Operations Research Group. Today, Vasant Gangavane is living out his theories in his sleepy Konkan village.

VASANT GANGAVANE IS NOT IN A VERY GOOD mood. He has just returned from the District Collectorate in Ratnagiri and his limbs ache from the rattling four-hour bus journey. His blue jeans are dirty and his long straggly beard and shoulder length hair are covered with dust. It is late evening but his ebony skin glistens with sweat.

A few young villagers, dressed in plain white cotton shirts and trousers are sitting before him. "We have not been able to do much *Anna*," says one of them shifting uneasily. "We have to walk long distances in the sun and our feet get blisters."

"We have to go hungry," says another. "Most of the villages don't have hotels and since we are strangers we feel shy of asking for food."

Vasant runs his hand through his beard feverishly. His tired eyes burn through his thick lenses with irritation. "Don't just think about your problems. Think only of the task before you then all your personal problems will vanish. As for food, just take some rice along with you, ask for a pot in the village, boil the rice and eat it with salt. Simple."

They are sitting in a small dusty shed in a village called Pinguli (off the national highway to Goa, about 460 kilometres from Bombay) alongside the low rolling hills of the Konkan. Here live the Thakars, a tribe of performing artistes now driven to poverty. Vasant Gangavane is a Thakar himself. But he is a maverick in this dusty, backward village.

Ten years ago he was a student of Operations Research—

Ashok Gopal is on the staff of **Imprint**. *His last article was* **The Kung Fu Films Take Over** *in July 1983.*

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"Now after my ten years of my work here I am sure I have defined the problem, that the root cause of backwardness in the Konkan. . . . is not so much incompetent politicians and bureaucrats as fundamentally wrong planning."

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Vasant Gangavane outside his 'office' at Pinguli.

the specialised field of management concerned with mathematical analysis of problems—at the prestigious Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, University of Pennsylvania. As part of the institute's Operations Research Consulting Group he was adviser to such mega-corporations as Standard Oil and Anhauser Busch.

Vasant could easily have got a top-ranking job in India or America. But he turned his back on these options and returned to his village in 1972 to work on problems he thought he would best love to solve: developing the Konkan, his homeland, one of the most backward regions of Maharashtra and reviving his tribe's dying folk arts of puppeteering and *chitrakathi* (the art of narrating Puranic stories with pictures).

Since he came back from America, Vasant has now revived interest in the Thakars' arts amongst scholars and government agencies and preserved many of their age-old deteriorating artifacts: *chamdyacha bahulya* (leather shadow puppets), *kalsutri bahulya* (wooden string puppets) and *chitrakathi* paintings. He is now concentrating on adult education programmes and the Maharashtra State Government's Comprehensive Water Schedule Development Programme (COWDEP). Under this scheme the government pays for *nallahs*, *bunds* and other constructions planned by villagers themselves to save rain water. The conserved water can then be used to bring fallow land under cultivation. The Konkan has large tracts of fallow land and receives a lot of rainfall, most of which now drains uselessly to the sea. Thus COWDEP, Vasant feels, is ideally suited to developing the Konkan.

He operates from this shed, the office of the Gokul Prakalp Pratisthan, a rural development trust founded by him in 1977. The young villagers sitting before him are volunteers whose job is to prepare the people of specific areas for adult education programmes and COWDEP. But they face several problems and by the time these are discussed and the volunteers leave, it is dark.

Vasant picks up his small suitcase and walks back to his house, a short distance behind his office. A tiled cottage surrounded by jackfruit trees, it was built by his father years ago, when this area was believed to be infested with ghosts. His father was a trendsetter in other ways also. He was among the first of the Thakars to declare (sometime in the '20s) that he was no longer interested in making a miserable living holding shows of puppets and *chitrakathi* tnat no one wanted to see or pay for (everybody wanted the *tamasha* or the cinema). The craziest thing he did was to send Vasant to school when all his boyhood friends helped their parents in the fields or in catching fish. Thus, Vasant Gangavane became the first matriculate among Thakars and later the only one in this entire region to have studied in the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Indian Institute of Management (IIM) and later, Wharton.

PEOPLE ALL OVER THE SOUTHERN KONKAN ADORE HIM AS *ANNA*, THE ELDER BROTHER, THE LEARNED ONE WHO CAME BACK FROM AMERICA.

VASANT GANGAVANE SPENDS most of his waking hours travelling in rickety State Transport buses to distant villages, the District Collectorate in Ratnagiri and the State Secretariat in Bombay. People in hundreds of villages all over the southern Konkan districts of Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg adore him as *Anna*, the elder brother (he is only 41), the learned one who came back from America to work for their welfare. Very few know of, or understand, his management and operations research background. Vasant does not mention it either—that way he feels he is on par with the people. Besides, he himself considers his American experience a part of a distant past, almost of another lifetime. One American name, however, is forever imprinted in his memory: Dr Jonathan Rhodes, the University of Pennsylvania Medical School's internationally reputed surgeon who came up with the wild idea of building an ultra-modern hospital for the university's centenary.

Until then, Vasant's life had been an ordered succession of academic glories. But he had no clear-cut motives and a nagging feeling of inferiority remained (after all he came from a backward tribe, had studied in a village school and spoke halting English). After school, Vasant had gone on to Bombay's Elphinstone College and then to IIT, Powai. Here he got a BE Honours degree and landed himself with a job in Crompton Greaves, the engineering company. One year on the

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shop floor however left him with sinus trouble and a conviction that he was meant for better things. So he joined the IIM, Calcutta with vague ambitions of becoming an economist and joining the Planning Commission. He stood first in his MBA class and at the end of the second year he was offered a Fullbright Fellowship to do a doctorate in Operations Research in the Wharton School.

When he left for America, somewhere at the back of his mind he harboured ambitions of going back to his village with fresh solutions for his backward people. But in Wharton he soon became a part of the jet set management clique. As a member of the Operations Research Consulting Group he was constantly flying all over the country as consultant to top American corporations, simultaneously collecting credit points with breathtaking ease.

It was Rhodes' plan for a *sheesh mahal* (as Vasant called it) that put an end to this. The University administration did not want the hospital—it would be too expensive and was quite unnecessary—but since they were wary of standing up to an international heavyweight, they asked Wharton's Operations Research Consulting Group to do the hatchet job. Even before they started on the job Vasant knew it was going to be a dirty affair: Rhodes' project could be shot down only if it was made to look utterly ludicrous. Yet after three months they had enough material to prove just that but Vasant was already getting queasy about this kind of work. Soon after Whartons' major ego-boosting victory over Rhodes, one of Vasant's aides, driven by the sheer anxiety and euphoria, lost his head. That was the turning point. Vasant sat back and began to wonder where his life was heading.

"I realized then that I had come to America to enrich my awareness, to build up my confidence, not to rack my brains solving their corporate problems," he now recalls. "America is known as a land of opportunity. Now I wanted to test that out, to prove myself." For the next two years he went on a business binge. He started a travel agency (its working capital came from friends and Indian families in Pennsylvania), bought an old house and converted it into a student's hostel, then a hotel from a Pakistani and turned it into the Maharajah, the first Indian restaurant on the campus, a Marathi periodical, *Vaarta* and finally a door-to-door grocery delivery system for Indian families living nearby. By now Vasant was brimming with confidence. Though none of these ventures had really made big money, America taught him that he could survive. "I began to wonder, that if I, an alien, could do so much in this country, surely I would be able to do something for my people too."

"OPERATIONS RESEARCH IS CONCERNED WITH FINDING THE RIGHT SOLUTIONS TO THE *RIGHT* PROBLEMS. WHAT USUALLY HAPPENS, IS THAT THE PROBLEM IS UNDEFINED."

In October 1972 Vasant returned to Pinguli, leaving his doctorate unfinished (he refused to write a report on the Jonathan Rhodes project), with a large suitcase crammed with books.

The first few years after his return were spent in trying to introduce radical farming techniques around Pinguli. Several of his projects, however, flopped: a citronella grass (used in aromatic industries) plantation had to be abandoned because the bank that was supposed to sponsor it, backed out; a cattle crossbreeding scheme never took off because of poor quality semen supplied by the government. These failures convinced Vasant that he needed an independent organisation, so he founded the Gokul Prakalp Pratisthan in 1977.

Vasant now regards his earlier failures as useful experiences. One of the important lessons he learnt, he says, is that government rural development programmes rarely work because of skewed thinking in the planning process itself. "Our planners first decide to build a dam or a steel plant and then try to find a place to fit it. I think, logically, they should work exactly the other way round. When you sit down to draw out a plan to develop a region you first study the potential of its land and manpower, then think of irrigation projects, industries etc to realise this potential. You pool in the plans of different regions and you have a national plan." Regional plans, he says, can be drawn up by the villagers themselves with the help of experts. When people plan for themselves there will be a greater check on local bureaucrats and politicians. He calls this the 'Land-Man' model of planning. COWDEP, he feels, conforms to this model.

"VASANT GANGAVANE IS AN articulate and big talker. In fact, that is all he does—talk big," says one high-ranking official in the District Collectorate, Ratnagiri. Other bureaucrats point out that for his ten years of work, *Anna* has few concrete achievements.

Vasant's reply to such criticism is that he is not interested in 'distributing goodies or building monuments'. "I

Vasant working at home: "I am here only to make the people aware."

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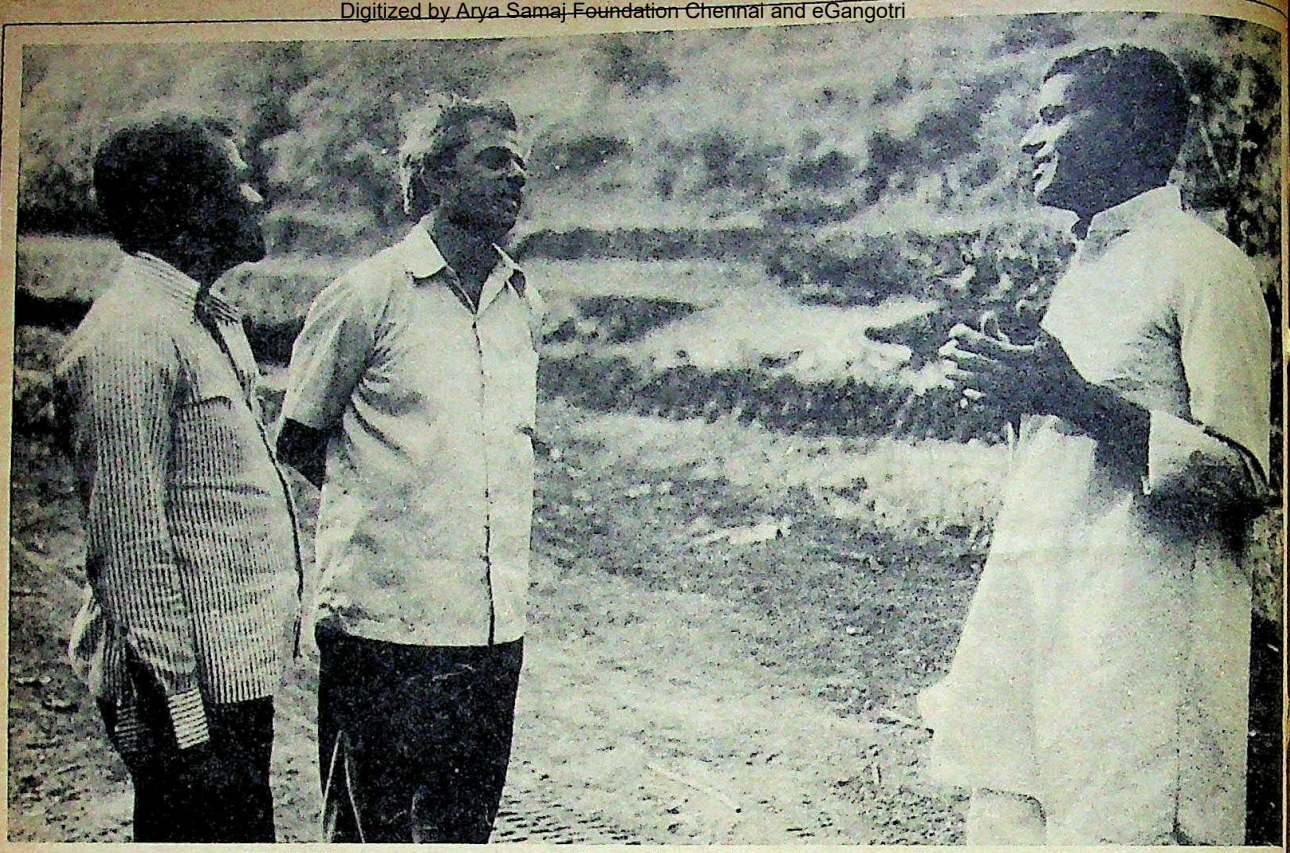

COWDEP volunteers, Jagannath Desai (far right) and Balkrishna Desai (centre).

am here only to make the people aware. Ultimately every one has to work for his own benefit."

Nevertheless, he has several substantial, though not obvious 'achievements'. He got the government to declare the Thakars a 'scheduled tribe' so that they could enjoy the constitutional privileges. He also prodded the local MLA to have the government declare an industrial estate around the nearby town of Kudal (about two kms from Pinguli) and the first factory in this now booming area was built on Vasant's land. Pinguli itself will soon have low cost houses designed by a young Goan architect, Gerry da Cunha. Apart from helping start several *ashramshalas* (tribal schools) and adult education classes Vasant's biggest achievement to date is his COWDEP effort.

Though it is a government programme, local bureaucrats have had little success in pushing it through—COWDEP can be implemented only if two-thirds of the landowners in a village give their written consent to a common plan. Convincing illiterate, tradition and caste-bound villagers to sit together and thrash out such a plan obviously requires tremendous patience and familiarity with the people. But the people do not trust the bureaucrats and it is anyway difficult to get them interested in things they have never heard of before.

Vasant's technique is to build up crowds and suspense. "You *don't* just land up in a village and start lecturing," he tells his volunteers. "You first pick out the prominent elders and tell them that there is going to be a meeting the next week, addressed by a big *saheb*. Then you make a big fuss about arrangements so that everyone senses that something big is happening. When the great day arrives you take another volunteer (whom the villagers have never seen before) as the *saheb* in a jeep and the meeting is a sure hit. After several such 'official' meetings you finally break in COWDEP: what it means, how it will help the people, what they have to do." After several rounds of such meetings Vasant and his aides managed to get Ville, a village 120 miles north of Pinguli under the plan in 1981. Now more than 25 villages will soon come under the programme and every other day villagers from far flung areas come to Vasant and ask him to get their villages under COWDEP.

"OUR PLANNERS FIRST DECIDE TO BUILD A DAM, THEN FIND A PLACE TO FIT IT. I THINK THEY SHOULD WORK EXACTLY THE OTHER WAY ROUND."

Yet, much remains to be done. There are nearly 1,500 villages in the two districts of Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg alone and the biggest problems before Vasant are finance and volunteers. The Gokul Prakalp Pratisthan receives funds from different government departments but this barely helps to pay for the travelling expenses of Vasant and ten volunteers. Fortunately, Vasant has the assistance of several equally dedicated men: Balkrishna Desai, 45, a spare parts dealer and small contractor met Vasant in Pune three years back and decided to return to his native village, Ville; he now works as Vasant's unofficial aide and right hand man. Jagannath Desai, 57, his brother, was a Jana Sangh and Bharatiya Janata Party activist in the Konkan. Now he has quit party politics and joined the COWDEP effort. Shivajirao Sawant, a veteran socialist and freedom fighter, now a local Congress (I) bigwig, is another great help as the Chairman of the Land Development Bank, Ratna-

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giri. Many of the Bank's officials, including several post-graduates of Agriculture are also active COWDEP volunteers. Together they make a compact team, bound more by friendship and dreams of developing their homeland than ideology or organisation. They are confident that once new cashew and mango plantations planned under COWDEP start bearing fruit the programme will spread by itself. "The idea of villagers planning their own future themselves has an inner dynamism," says Shivajirao Sawant.

COWDEP however, is not Vasant's lasting obsession. Even if the government abandons the programme in the future he is sure its objectives could be achieved by combining several other existing programmes. His ultimate dream is to work out a practical model for planning that could be applied for the rest of the country. The complete Operations Research expert, Vasant does not consider COWDEP the ultimate solution to all rural problems—"It is only the first step in the right direction."

"Operations Research is basically concerned with finding the right solutions to the *right* problems. What usually happens, especially in India, is that the problem is undefined so we waste a lot of time trying to find the solution and often come up with the wrong one. So defining the problem is the first and most important step. Now after my ten years of work here I am sure that I have defined the problem, that the root cause of backwardness in the Konkan (and probably other regions in the rest of the country) is not so much incompetent politicians and bureaucrats as fundamentally wrong planning. Our planners have completely ignored the potential of our land and our manpower. Rather, they have concentrated in randomly building steel plants, dams and compiling statistics."

VASANT SAYS THAT HE IS NOT INTERESTED IN DISTRIBUTING GOODIES OR BUILDING MONUMENTS . "I AM HERE ONLY TO MAKE THE PEOPLE AWARE . . . ."

HE IS SITTING OUTSIDE THE TEA shack on the highway. Luxury buses from Panaji whizz past him towards Bombay. In the distance he can see Sakharam Mhasge, one of the last surviving Thakar artistes walking jauntily towards a stream about five kilometres away to catch fish. The Thakars have a quaint way of catching fish (since they were traditionally nomadic performing artistes they know little about farming or fishing). They spread a net across the stream, then *dive* down, drive the fish to a corner and grab them with their bare hands when they get entangled in the net.

Then they pierce a reed through the eyes of the dead fish, tie a loop, sling it around their shoulders and walk to the market in Kudal to sell them. Usually they make Rs 10 or Rs 15 and return home with a few essentials and very often, liquor. Sometimes when the catch is good, they have 10 to 20 rupees to spare. How long will the Thakars continue to make a living like this? And what happens to the arts after the few surviving artistes pass away? Vasant has made plans for an art village that can become a tourist attraction, a crafts centre where youngsters can be trained. All the applications and papers are lying with the government but nothing has happened so far.

Everything in a village moves so slowly. The people don't take to new ideas (it took 15 meetings spread over a year to get Ville under COWDEP), even radical government plans inch forward (it took a year for the government machinery to start moving here). It can be very frustrating for an outsider. Several young men who joined Vasant in a fit of inspiration quit just as quickly, sickened by the lethargy of the bureaucracy, the ignorance of the people and the inevitable difficulties of village life. At least one young man left because he couldn't quite digest the idea of bathing in the open and using a pit lavatory.

Vasant is unmarried and says he felt a terrible need to 'talk to someone on your own wavelength' the first few years after coming back from America. "Now I have learnt to be sympathetic, to come down to the level of the common people."

Though he has had several 'alliances' marriage has not worked out and now when he is occasionally driven to bouts of loneliness he sings—to himself. Or he goes back to his treasured books, especially Vinoba Bhave's commentary on the *Bhagvad Gita*, the *Geeta Pravachan*. It is this book that brought him *jagruti* (enlightenment), he says and it remains a constant source of encouragement. But he cannot elucidate. Vasant Gangavane is a poor philosopher. He says he believes in the *Gita*'s ideal of doing your duty without hope of reward or pleasure. But he is reluctant to say more. He would rather talk about COWDEP and the basics of developmental planning. ♦

Vasant with volunteers: build up crowds and suspense

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Salman Rushdie: Learning To Live With Fame And Shame

By Vir Sanghvi

WHEN SALMAN RUSHDIE came to India last April, the rapturous reception he received took him completely by surprise. Magazines vied to interview him, his lectures were packed out, strangers shook his hand in the street and at least one university invited him to join the faculty.

"It was quite an important event in my life," recalls the author in his North London home. "It made me want to spend quite a lot of time there." While the celebrity status was probably quite attractive, Rushdie was more impressed by the fact that many people he met had read *Midnight's Children* and had liked it. "The greatest compliment I received was when people came up to me and said, 'You shouldn't have written this book—I should have!' In a sense, that showed how much the content of *Midnight's Children* was a part of everybody's experience."

It is unlikely that he will be received with quite the same enthusiasm in Pakistan, where his new novel (*Shame*: Rupa: Rs 30) is set. "I knew there would be problems with the book," he says. "I was very careful to say nothing about *Shame* while I was in India. I was supposed to go to Pakistan next and I knew what the reaction there would be. So, I either refused to answer any questions about it or I lied! I told some people that it was about racism in Britain, others that it was about an unnamed country and sometimes I said it was a love story!"

Shame is in fact very clearly about Pakistan. Its two protagonists Raza Hyder and Iskander Harappa are quite plainly inspired by Zia and Bhutto and in some ways, the novel does for Pakistan what *Midnight's Children* did for India, by providing an alternative approach to its recent history. The Ayub years, the Yahya period, the Bangladesh crisis, the wars with India, Zia's coup and Bhutto's execution all find a place in *Shame*.

"I think *Midnight's Children* and *Shame* are complementary," says Rushdie, "But I don't want *Shame* to be seen simply as a novel about Pakistan. It is about the nature of evil and about the connection between shame and violence. If you shame people long enough, they turn to violence." He is keen to emphasize the distinction between the novel's historical bits and its fictional aspect.

"Originally, I wanted to write a high tragedy about Pakistan. But was the Zia-Bhutto relationship the stuff of tragedy? It was really a tragic situation played out by people of low calibre. The people involved didn't deserve high tragedy." Rushdie's solution has been to write a high tragedy, based on the Zia-Bhutto clash but because history did not provide the tragic figures, he has created his own. "There are elements of Zia and Bhutto in Hyder and Harappa, but they are not meant to be exact literary representations of historical characters."

Whether readers will perceive this distinction is another matter. In one of the first Indian reviews of the book Iqbal Masud (in the *Sunday Observer*) missed it completely and attacked the novel precisely on the grounds that Zia and Bhutto were not worthy of high tragedy! More worrying is the character of Sufiya Zenobia, Hyder's retarded daughter.

"When I started the book, she was not so important. But after I began writing it she soon became the centre of the novel." Sufiya Zenobia is retarded and co-incidentally, so is the real General Zia's daughter. Insists Rushdie, "I know it seems impossible but I just didn't know. And when I did find out, Sufiya Zenobia was just too important to be deleted. I know this will be seen as a cheap shot. But anyone who reads the book will see that there is no attempt to get at him through his daughter. I can't really help the co-incidence. You make something up and it turns out to be so!"

Rushdie is reconciled to *Shame* being banned in Pakistan. No Pakistani publisher is likely to defy the ban because, under Pakistani law, every bookseller who stocks the novel is criminally liable and as Rushdie explains, "you can't really ask people to take that sort of risk." He knows that the book will be savaged in Pakistan and expects that the process will be painful for his family. But he is not seriously concerned. "I don't think any harm will come to them. There are Pakistanis in London who've done much worse things and nobody has taken revenge on their families."

He does however deny that the book is anti-Pakistan, though this is a conclusion that many Indian readers are bound to come to. The tone is savage and there is some unconcealed bitterness. The affection and nostalgia with which he treated Bombay in *Midnight's Children* are clearly missing.

SHAME WILL BE PUBLISHED ALL over the world this month (though an Indian edition came out at the end of July) and Rushdie is clearly apprehensive about the reception it will receive. Technically, it is a different sort of writing from *Midnight's Children*. "This is a more controlled book," he says.

Vir Sanghvi is the Executive Editor of Imprint. *This interview was conducted in London last month.*

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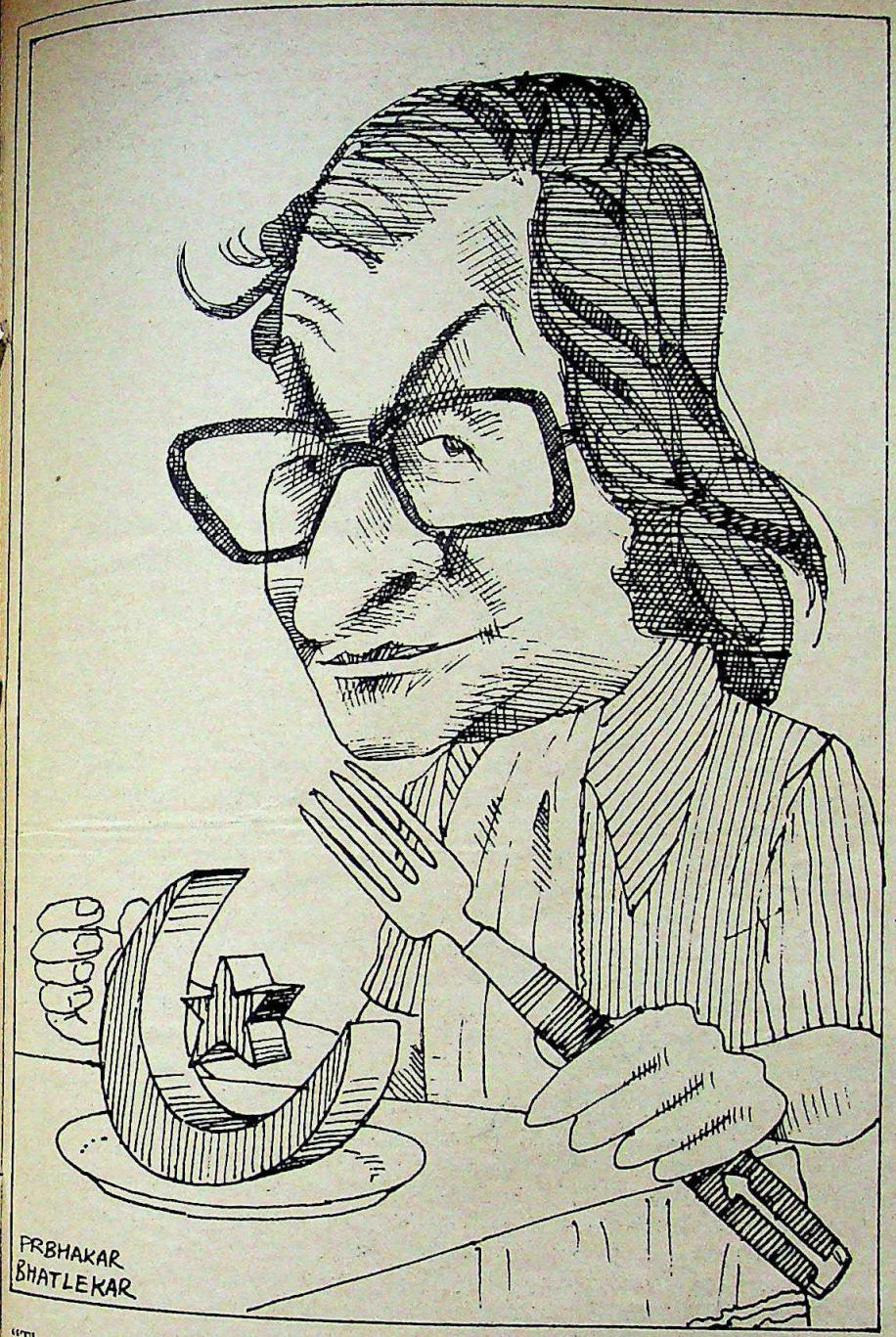

"The point about *Midnight's Children* is the loose ends. It is a world of a multitude of stories. I needed the form to create the atmosphere. The plot in *Shame* is supposed to be a trap. It is a closed society with very few doors out—so *Shame* is almost the opposite of *Midnight's Children*. There are no stray threads and there is a feeling of claustrophobia."

The structure too is very different. Whereas *Midnight's Children* traced the life of Saleem Sinai, *Shame* has no single central character. "That was deliberate," according to Rushdie. "I wanted a book without a centre. I wanted eight or nine characters to share the limelight. Each one would come to the front of the stage at different times and so the reader would see the same story from different angles, almost as though there was a 3-D effect."

Less successful perhaps is Rushdie's device of having himself as a narrator. At various points in the story, he intrudes and provides his own views on events. Thus, we are told how his family left Bombay for Pakistan against his wishes and what he thinks of racism in Britain. It is a device that owes much to Rushdie's own heroes like Milan Kundera but one that some readers may find jarring in the context of *Shame*. Rushdie feels that the device was necessary: "I wanted to discuss the position from which the book was written. I wanted to establish where I stood in relation to the events that I was writing about." He also feels that the narrator's intrusions allow the reader to draw back a little from the plot and to see it in more general terms, as a novel about evil, repression and shame and not just about Pakistan.

> "The plot in *Shame* is supposed to be a trap: There are very few doors out—so *Shame* is almost the opposite of *Midnight's Children*. There are no stray threads and there is a feeling of claustrophobia."

The prose this time is clearer than *Midnight's Children*. Brilliantly written as that book was, there were passages that nevertheless came across as self-congratulatory or 'too clever by half.' *Shame* is more tightly controlled. "It is a different style of prose. For one thing, the book demands a different style and I was also much more experienced," he agrees.

Many of Rushdie's Indian readers loved *Midnight's Children* because it was—in a sense—about them. *Shame* is probably their first chance to judge Rushdie as a novelist who writes about a different world. He is curious to see what the reaction will be. "One of the things a novel must do is make its own world—without footnotes. That is what fiction is about. The book should be accessible to people who know nothing about its world. And yet, people who do, should find that it is true." He has very little time for the India-as-exotica criticism of *Midnight's Children*, and finds it odd that people should have wanted him to write a book that was inaccessible to the general reader.

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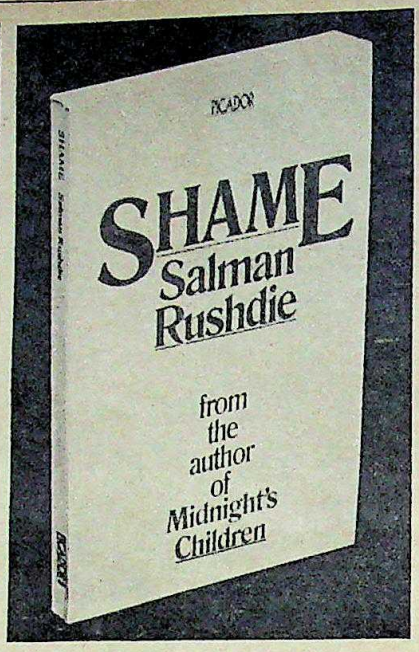
WHAT NOW? OBVIOUSLY, THE kind of reception that *Shame* gets will determine Rushdie's future plans, but he seems pretty certain that he will remain a full-time writer. He did not expect *Midnight's Children* to become a bestseller, and even underestimated the Booker Prize. "I thought that it would mean £10,000 tax free and give me a chance to sit at home and write for a year. I had no idea that it would generate so much interest." He had been pleased by the reviews but *Midnight's Children* did not really begin selling till after the Booker. And then, it took off in America. Now, translations of *Midnight's Children* are hitting European bestseller lists. The novel is selling well in France, it is a bestseller in Finland and a German translation should be out soon. Rushdie is a little bemused by his commercial success in countries whose people have no experience of India. But then, as he says, "Why should that matter? I have never been to South America and I enjoy reading Marquez."

Shame will probably get mixed reviews. For a start, there will be the inevitable backlash. When *Midnight's Children* was hailed as a classic, its author was unknown and reviewers approached the novel with no preconceptions. Now, Rushdie has a formidable reputation to support and some people feel that *any* book would be a let-down after *Midnight's Children*.

Moreover he has antagonised sections of the British press. He used TV's trendy new Channel Four to launch into a diatribe about racism in Britain; and when the Falklands fever was at its height, he condemned the British expedition, terming the war a battle over 'Maggie's Face'. Inevitably, some people will be gunning for him this time.

Rushdie seems to have accepted all this: "The only reason I got a platform to make political statements was because of my literature. So, to discredit my political views, they will have to be critical of the literature." Nevertheless, he is confident that now that he is so well-known, the book will be widely read, whatever the critics say.

And he is glad that he finished the first draft of *Shame* five days before he won the Booker: "At that stage, *Midnight's Children* hadn't really taken off and so I wasn't under the sort of pressure that I would have been, had I



waited a little longer." Of course, that first draft underwent several revisions. "My first drafts are always bad," he says. "At that stage I just sit and write. I try and put down everything so that at the end of it, I know what the book is about." In the course of rewriting, the book underwent some major changes: "Originally, it was to be a book about macho men, revolutions, coups and assassinations. But then, the female characters took over. The events were seen through the eyes of women and the book became much more than just a political tract. I came to see the parallels between two kinds of repression—political and sexual."

His bitterness about the repression of women in Pakistan does, in fact, come through quite strongly. And it will not make him popular in official Pakistani circles. But then, Rushdie is used to espousing unpopular views. After the uproar over his Falklands and racism outbursts had died down, he was at the centre of another storm. In an article in *The Times*, he committed the near-sacrilege of attacking the *Gandhi* film, provoking a furious retort from a thoroughly indignant Attenborough.

He planned last month to reply to a series of half-baked articles on India by John Cunningham in *The Guardian*, but then decided against it. Apart from the fact that the articles were not worth the trouble, he simply does not have the time. With the promotion for *Shame* well underway, he is constantly being interviewed.

When things do quieten down

"I think there is a kind of intellectual totalitarianism in Pakistan. There are things that are appalling and any writer should attack them. My views on Pakistani politics in no way lessen my feeling for the country."

though, he has some ideas for the future. He is considering writing a big book ('over 500 pages') set in the West because as he says, 'that is one part of my experience that I want to use'. He remains hesitant however about approaching a completely different culture. "I want to make Western characters, but I think I'll have some Indian ones too. . . like VS Naipaul. Every book of his contains Indian characters at the centre."

Before taking that plunge, Rushdie has something else lined up. During his trip to India he kept a detailed journal about the pople he met and the things he did. At the time he wasn't sure if that material would end up as fiction or journalism. Now, he seems certain that it will be fiction. "I don't know if there is a novel in it, but perhaps it could come out as short stories. I think that is going to be the next project."

Will he still write about India with the affection that distinguishes *Midnight's Children*? "Oh yes. I think that trip made me want to spend quite a lot of time there," he repeats. He denies again though that his attitude to Pakistan is far more negative. "I think there is a kind of intellectual totalitarianism there. And there are things that are appalling and any writer should have the right to attack them. My views on Pakistani politics in no way lessen my feeling for the country."

And as a parting shot: "But a writer must be honest. If you don't write honestly, then you can't write at all."

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John Oliver Perry And The Voices Of Emergency

By Dhiren Bhagat

THIS IS GOING TO BE A difficult interview to report. After all, it's not every day that I'm thrown out of a hotel room. So I suppose I had better do the conventional thing and begin at the beginning.

Soon after Chandrashekhar completed his protracted walk across the country on the eighth anniversary of the declaration of the Emergency he released an anthology of poems, *Voices Of Emergency*, which was edited by one John Oliver Perry, a professor, we were told, at something called Tufts, somewhere in America.

When the book came up to me for review I was surprised to find in it an old poem of mine written long before I had attained majority. I had not written it with the Emergency in mind. Further, it is not a poem of which I am particularly proud so I cannot say I was entirely happy to see it republished. To make matters worse, not only had my permission not been sought for its inclusion, a central image of the poem had been crucially mauled owing to a small but significant typographical inversion: the *dog* of my original had been elevated to *god* in Perry's anthology.

Having worked on the other side of book and magazine production I am aware how difficult it often is to get everything right. So I decided not to make a fuss about these slips, to hold my ego in check and to proceed with perusing the volume.

Soon after, Professor Perry came to Bombay. I was asked if I would interview him for this magazine. I accepted the assignment. I was curious. Who was this Professor Perry? Where did he come from? Tufts, as far as I knew, were clumps of hair strewn on the floors of seedy barbershops.

Dhiren Bhagat is a columnist for several newspapers. He also writes poems and was an Associate Editor of Poetry-London.

I WENT TO SEE PROFESSOR Perry at the Rosewood Hotel in Tulsiwadi, a lane as wholesome as any in Tardeo, at a little past five in the evening, on Friday, August 5. My appointment was for five, I was late: the rain had interfered with the traffic and spattered the white of my pyjama.

Professor Perry beamed at me from behind the orange fuzz of his beard. His collaborator PT Sanghvi rose from the chair he had occupied and sat with the Professor on the bed. I had read of Prabhubhai Sanghvi in Perry's preface to the anthology; beyond that I knew nothing of him. Half an hour later, I was to be glad of his honest presence in the room but I shouldn't anticipate the end.

I decided to get into the deep end straightaway. "Most of the poems are no good," I said. "What do you have to say about this?"

"I'm a relativist," said Professor Perry routinely. It was a mumbo-jumbo line he'd obviously been spouting to journalists and other groupies all over the country. "I don't accept the aesthetic experience as defined by *this* philosophy or *other*. What's a *good* poem depends on what affects you."

"Well, that's why I said I found most of them bad. Now what I'm asking you is whether *you* found them bad as well. I want to know what sort of standards you have."

"What *is* a good poem? Can you define a Good Poem?"

"Yes."

"How do you define it?"

"Denotatively, not connotatively."

Perry looked cheated. "OK OK. No, I don't make any special aesthetic claims for the poems in this volume. I don't think you've read the preface."

"Well actually I have and I found it pretty turgid. I was just trying to check if I had understood the claim and the disclaimer on page 29 correctly."

For those readers who don't have a copy of this enormously important document before them, what I'm referring to is a pompous passage that goes like this: "What the poetry records, therefore is a national impulse which we can hope will be equally well and widely served should ever another such situation occur. The poetic record stands as exemplary for other nations and peoples faced with similar threats to their democratic governments. It is in substantiation of these generalizations, rather than to claim a special cultural value, wisdom, power or prestige for any group or party or any individual poets or poetics, that this anthology can best be understood."

"Yes," said the professor, "I'm not making any special aesthetic claims for these poems, they represent a social record."

"So you admit that most of these poems are no good."

But the professor could not be easily persuaded of the value of plain speaking: a lifetime spent in America had caused his mind to be hopelessly addicted to polysyllable euphemism.

"No," he said, "They appear to me to be poems worthy of inclusion in this volume."

I wasn't going to be fobbed off by obtuseness. "Surely you don't accept everything that claims to be a poem as

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worthy of inclusion. What were the principles of selection you used? Did they have anything to do with quality or competence?"

"You don't seem to be aware of the nature of project," he said smugly. "I didn't select the poems," he said as if proud of the fact. "In each area there were coordinators, selectors and translators. Prabhubhai here was the coordinator for Maharashtra."

"In that case I'm probably talking to the wrong person. Your function seems to have been merely decorative."

"Yes," said the professor, "It's pretty decorative. I'm the organiser more than anything else."

Such honesty would have been endearing had it not given the lie to the publisher's blurb on the dust cover: 'Selected and edited by JOHN OLIVER PERRY . . .' If only we had a Trade Descriptions Act in India . . . .

WE MOVED ON TO THE SUBJECT of translation. With one notable exception (Lila Ray, translating from the Bengali) the translation seemed to me to be of poor quality. (Of course some poets have translated their own poems well—Jyotirmoy Dutta for instance—but I was talking of the principal translators.) I qualified my observation by adding that what I meant was that while it was possible the translations were accurate, most of the englished versions did not read well. Couldn't Perry have got decent poets to do the translating for him? It wasn't as if we didn't have any good translators—Ramanujan, Chitre, Mehrotra, Ezekiel, Parthasarathy. . . To get Dyaneshwar Nadkarni to translate from the Marathi was a sure strategy for failure. After beating about the bush a bit he came to the point. "I don't think we could have asked better translators to deal with these poems. For example Dilip Chitre, I am in touch with him. I have just spent the morning seeing his film. The poems aren't worth his time."

> "You don't seem to be aware of the nature of the project," he said smugly. "I didn't select the poems," he said as if proud of the fact.

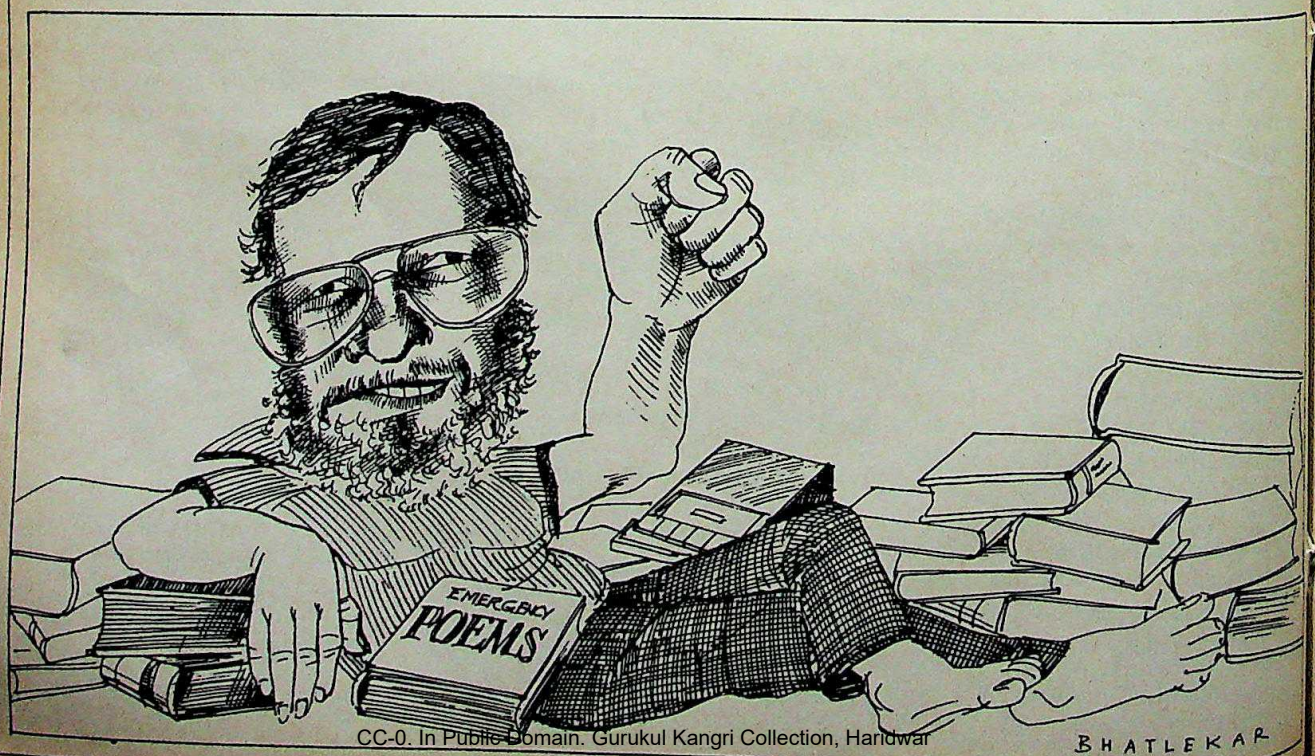
Wasn't that an admission that most of the poems weren't any good?

Double think came naturally to the political radical. "Of course not. But *individually* it is hard to justify a top ranking poet using his energy on these poems."

BACK IN 1978 UR ANANTHAmurthy suggested to Perry who describes himself as 'a long time civil rights and peace activist in America' that the latter could use his sabbatical in India researching into Emergency literature. Perry liked the idea (translated into Perry's polysyllables: "We had discovered our many common cultural ideas, both literary and broadly political and the research project was designed to engage those interests") and promptly came to India. But the project wasn't as easy as that.

"From the start of this project in 1978," writes Perry in the preface, "I have had to confront both in myself and in the hundreds of persons I have consulted a profound and many-sided doubt not only about the general significance, but indeed the very existence, of authentic Emergency protest poetry."

Later in the preface Perry outlines what he calls the two 'dubious hypotheses' commonly advanced about Emergency poetry. It is worth quoting them at some length as they seem to me pretty sound. "Most strenuous was the point made by almost every literary academician, journalist, poet or editor that I met, or later corresponded with, right up to 1982. They said that not only was almost no good poetry written to protest the Emergency, but also a lot of bad poetry had been brought out after the Emergency was lifted, probably falsely in order to attest to a social conscience, if not to



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incautious political or literary valour. It was also averred that in discussing the Emergency the intellectual élite, the hyper-educated literati, created for themselves exciting experiences out of paranoid delusions of officially inspired injuries and insults in order to exaggerate their own social importance, publishing these claims particularly after the Emergency was lifted. Noting that opportunism and cliquishness characterize literary artists generally, many Indians have told me that writers, like most people, shifted with social tides and have little genuine political concern or sophistication. Less cynically, it has been proposed that genuine social and cultural confusion more than political fear and oppression accounts for the relative silence of literary comment during the Emergency."

Despite this abundant caution he received, Perry, who confesses he is raw when it comes to Indian writing ('... Indian literature, where I am totally untutored. . .') went ahead and produced a 299-page anthology with 280 poems from 250 poets. So I had looked hard in the 44-page preface for an adequate rebuttal of the 'dubious hypotheses', for a *reason* to go ahead with this (quite possibly worthless) anthology.

All I had found was this: "Fortunately in 1977-78 at least four regional anthologies had already been collected . . ." And later a single sentence which didn't strike me as being a particularly good rebuttal: "It was all this (publishing) activity during the early Janata period which had aroused the suspicions I have recounted, but, of course, after 1980 most ulterior political motives had evaporated." That's all.

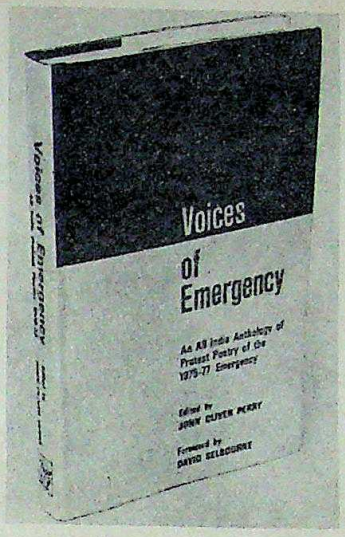
Not surprisingly I decided to concentrate on the 'dubious hypotheses' and their hopeless rebuttal for the rest of the interview.

"That's not the only place in the preface where I rebut the hypotheses," he said growing increasingly uncomfortable.

"Here is a copy of the book," I said. "Please point to me where exactly this rebuttal can be found."

He grew shifty. "I'm not sure I want to engage in this kind of discussion," accusing me, as it were, of impropriety.

"Why not Professor Perry?" I continued. "It's a perfectly respectable point I have raised, in fact it's absolutely central to your entire enterprise. For if there is no adequate rebuttal, the project is, as the hypotheses suggest, useless, even as a social record, let alone as a readable anthology of *poems.*"



John Oliver Perry's vulgar voice of emergency is but the hurrahing of such a tourist. Thank you, Professor. We can do without your loud hurrahs.

He raised his voice and spoke clearly, articulating every word, as if I were an imbecile. "I am not going to engage in this kind of discussion."

"Put plainly, you are not going to answer my question?"

"I suppose you could say that."

"I'm sorry," I said, "I am going to insist that you answer it."

"No."

"Well then I am going to conclude that you have no answer as I can see no other reason why you refuse."

Sprawled as he was on his bed, he grew vicious. He shouted. "YOU'RE DOING A POLITICAL NUMBER ON ME, BUDDY."

I scribbled that rapidly. He was still vicious. "Are you going to quote me?" he demanded.

"Yes, perhaps."

"You can't quote me saying that."

"Why not?"

"Because if you quote me saying that I'll say you're a liar."

"You can't do that," I said. "Prabhubhai heard you say it." I read from my notes. "Prabhubhai, didn't you hear Professor Perry say a minute ago, 'You're doing a political number on me buddy'?"

Prabhubhai nodded assent.

Beaten yet again, Perry started abusing me. "I know what sort of person you are and the sort of relationships. . ."

I was eager to get on with the interview. Shaking my head in despair I said to both Prabhubhai and Perry, "Please, please, please, let's come back to the interview, let's behave like adults. I'm not interested in the cheap sensation of a sharp quote. If you answer my questions Professor Perry and cooperate with me, I won't publish that stuff about my doing a political number. . ."

Perry was crazy by now. "That's a THREAT." I was about to explain to him that in fact he was the one who had threatened me ("If you quote me saying that, I'll say you're a liar") when I saw an arm shoot out towards me. "OUT, OUT," he yelled and flung open the door. I scrambled out with as many things of mine as I could collect.

I HAVE DEALT WITH *VOICES OF Emergency* elsewhere, reviewing it for *The Sunday Observer*. So I shall not go into any details here. But I hope this account of my interview with the unsound professor gives a glimpse of one sort of person who by importing into India his crassness, ignorance and 'relativism' perpetuates intellectual and aesthetic confusion here.

I have always been wary of imported 'peace activists' with dessicated minds who come to Asia to roost. Naipaul once called them revolutionaries with return tickets. And now at last, the truth about them is being recognised, even in the popular papers.

Speaking of Peter Burger's paper *The Third World Or A Religious Idea*, Iqbal Masud recently wrote in the *Indian Express*: "The Third World is now becoming an intellectual escape or a holiday from the complex, individualistic, demanding, exhausted, emotional life of the West." John Oliver Perry's vulgar voice of emergency is but the hurrahing of such a tourist. Thank you, Professor Perry. We can do without your loud hurrahs. ◆

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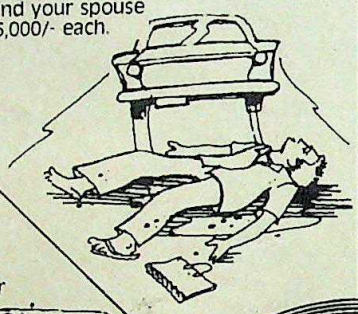

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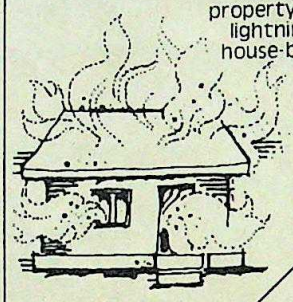

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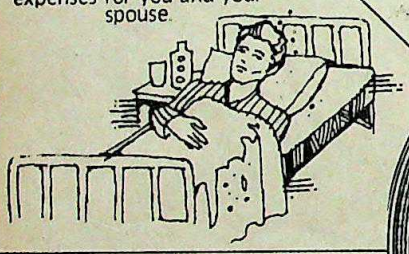

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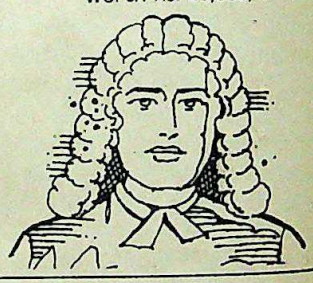

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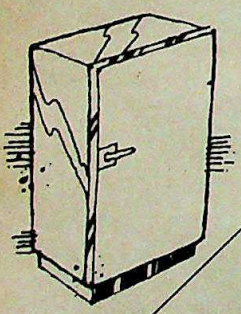

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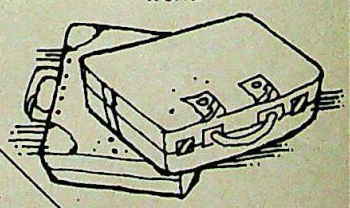

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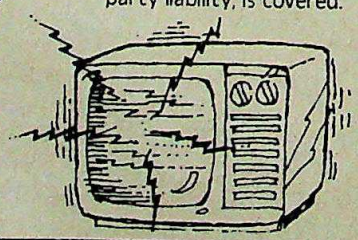

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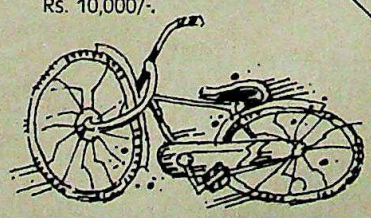

Besides which, you can omit one or two covers which don't apply to you, with a corresponding decrease in the premium.

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Life At The 'Industrial'

By Sooni Taraporevala

WHAT MOST BOMBAY-ites know as RTI used to be called The Sir Ratan Tata Industrial Home For Parsi Women. This was abbreviated by the Parsi community to just one word 'Industrial'. You bought your *Tarapori patio* and *patrel* from Industrial and received your daily *bhonas* (meals) from the Industrial's catering services. Well-to-do Parsis and non-Parsis have different and more expensive reference points. RTI is where you can buy the most scrumptious chocolate cakes; RTI is where you had that gorgeous saree embroidered. The Institute has been many things to many people. For most of the women who work there, it has been their whole life.

Begun exclusively for Parsi women by Naoroji Patuck in 1899, the RTI (originally called the Stri Zarthosti Mandal) today employs 350 women in its various departments including cookery, hand embroidery, tailoring, laundry, and weaving. The RTI was, and still considers itself a welfare institution 'where poor women could come out of their distressing surroundings to work and earn in a cheerful atmosphere'.

The 'Industrial' no longer employs only Parsis and its low wages are compensated for by a sense of security. You can enter the doors of RTI at 18, poor and unskilled and stay there all your life until you choose to retire—there is no compulsory retirement age. Many of the women there are over 60. And when you do retire you have at your command considerable skills and many friends—your co-workers who have shared most of your life with you in an atmosphere not unlike a benevolent yet strict Parsi School.

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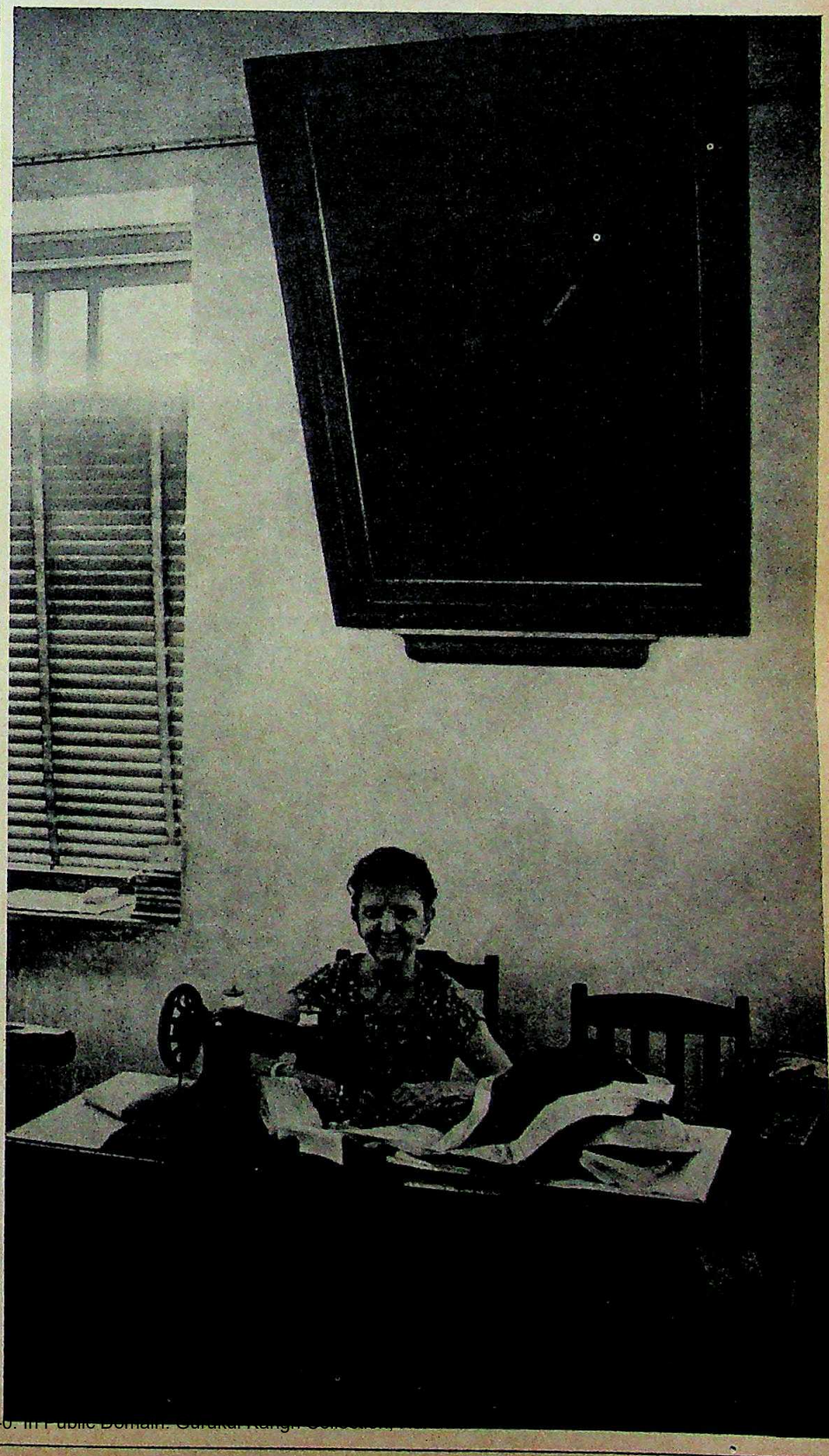

You can enter its doors at 18, poor and unskilled, and stay there all your life.

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Your co-workers have shared most of your life with

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mosphere not unlike a benevolent yet strict Parsi school.

(continued from page 81)

These pictures were taken by Bombay-based photographer, Sooni Taraporevala, 26, and constitute a part of her series on the Parsi community to be published in a forthcoming book.

"I think it's important to make invisible people visible," says Ms Taraporevala of her work. "I think photographing the RTI women for instance, gave them some importance and a feeling of dignity. I talked to some of them; knew some of them. I have a relative who has been with the Institute for 38 years and who feels so much a part of the organisation. It was through her I got my first personal insights into the RTI."

Most of Ms Taraporevala's subjects include lower and middle class Parsis in their traditional environments 'in whose hands the Parsi culture really lives'. "While charity and generosity has always been an integral part of well-to-do Parsis, what also existed was a strong spirit of camaraderie and a feeling of familiarity. Today, charity is more institutionalised, bureaucratic and unfeeling. The personal touch is missing."

In documenting and capturing lifestyles, customs, rituals and habits of the community, Sooni Taraporevala has been travelling extensively in the Parsi pockets of Western India over the past four years. However, her portfolio has not been restricted to the community that she herself belongs to but include lifestyles of people in rural India, France, Spain and the United States where she completed her higher education. She started out by using a Nikkormat but has recently switched to the Leica "because it's much quieter, quicker and its compactness makes it less obtrusive which is ideally suited to my kind of photography."

Educated in Cinema Studies at Harvard and New York Universities, Ms Taraporevala has exhibited her works at two solo shows at Harvard and Princeton and has participated in a group show at the New York University photo gallery. She plans to exhibit her work in Bombay.

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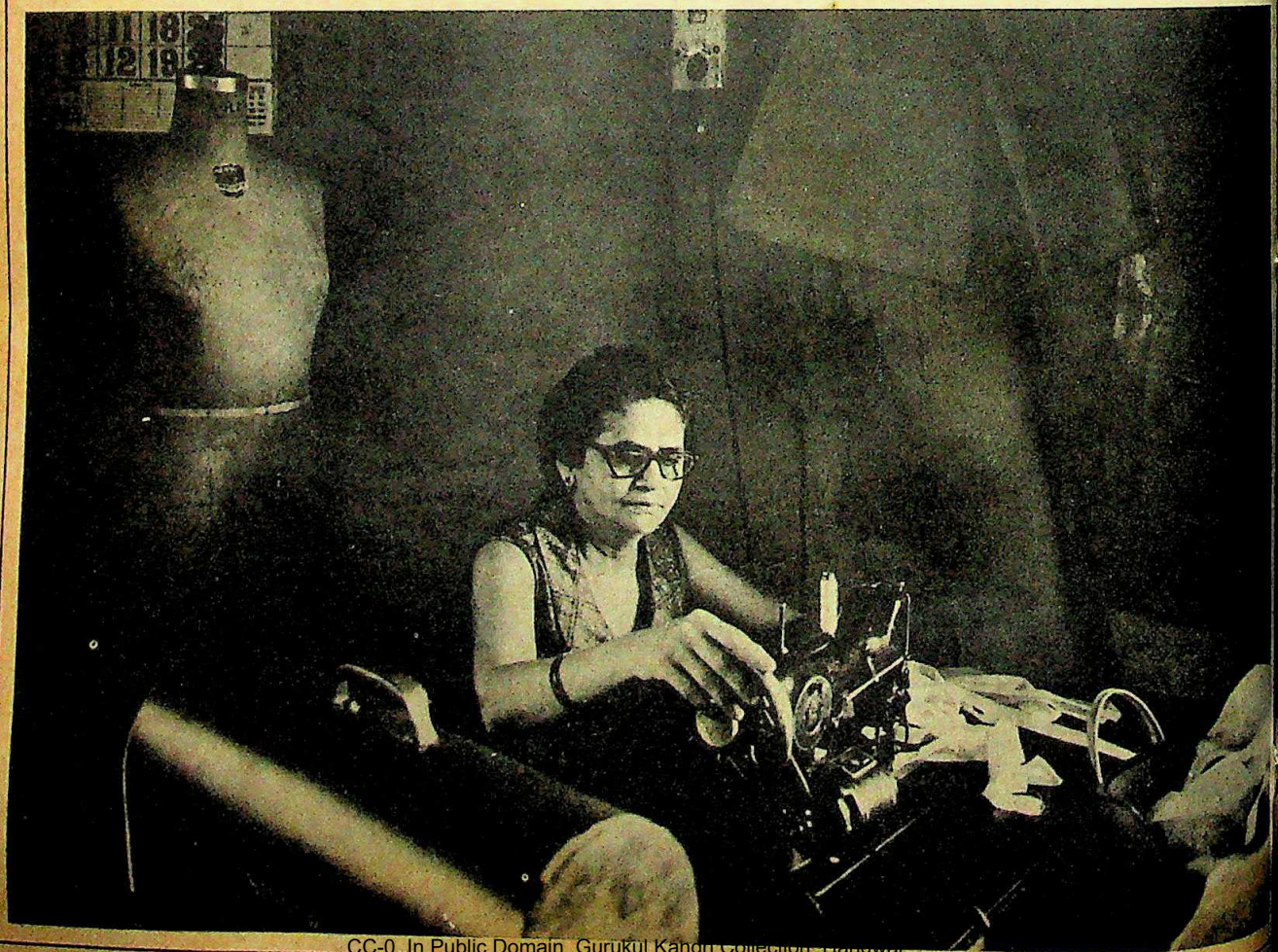
When you do retire, you have at your command considerable skills. . .



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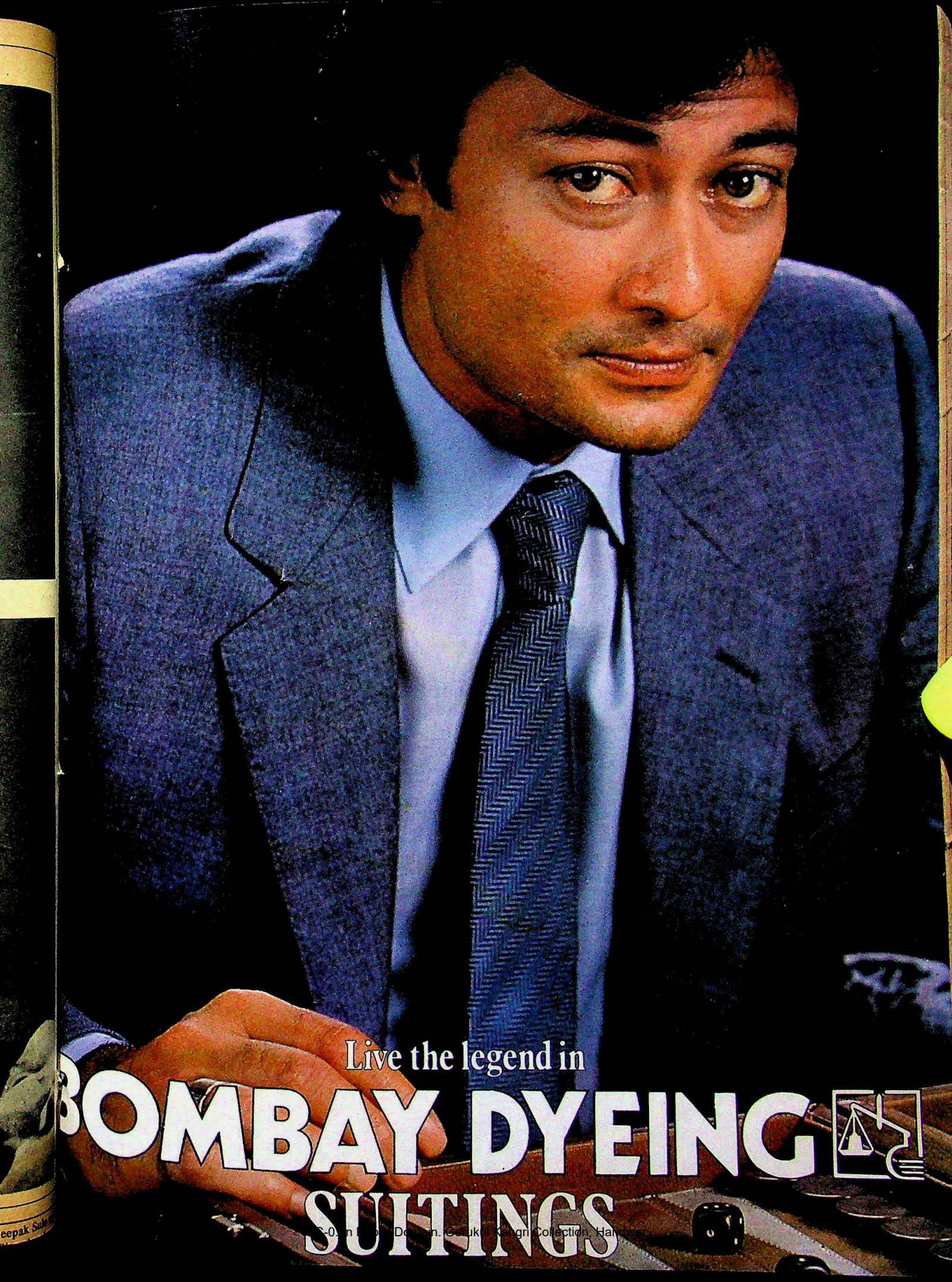

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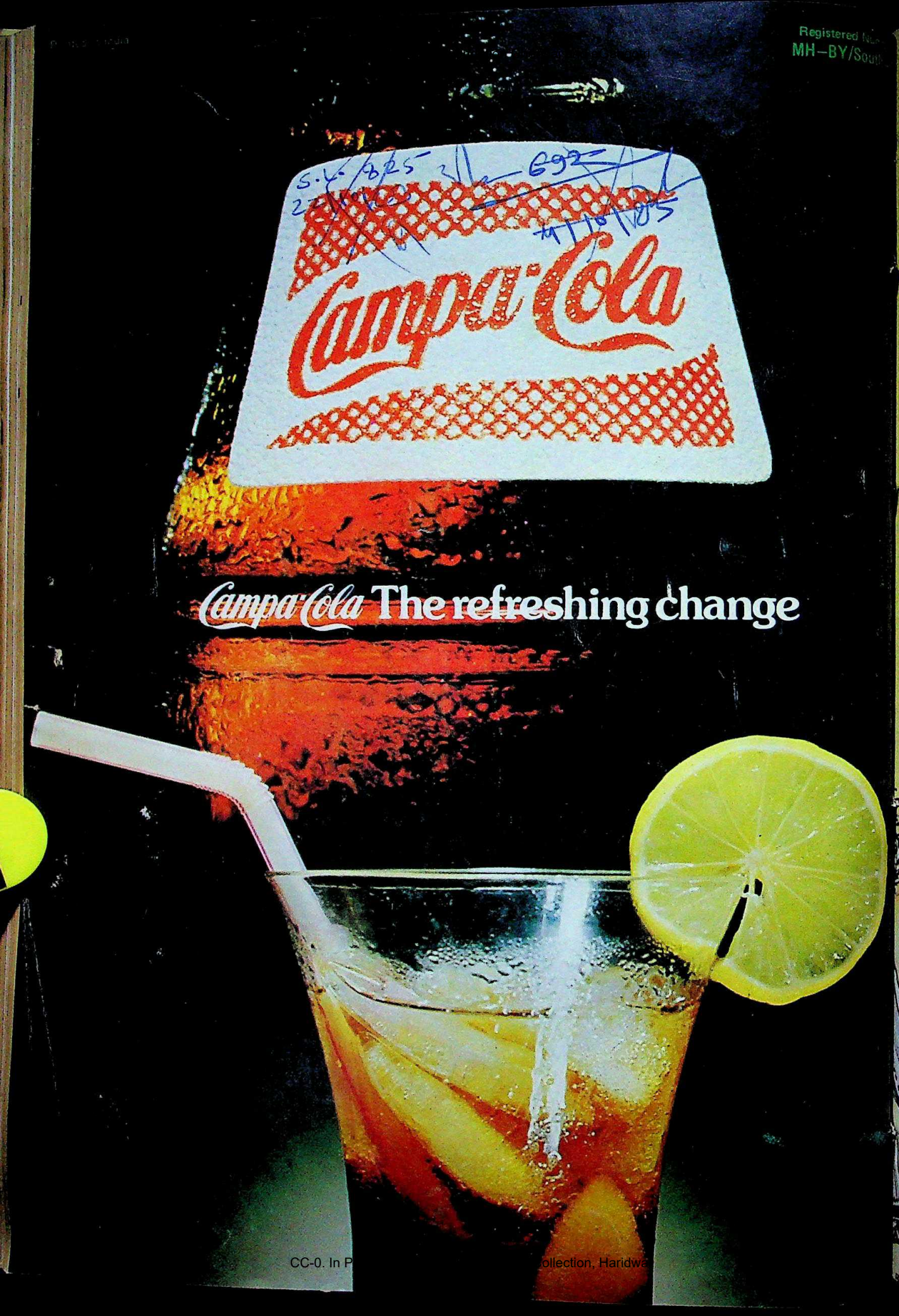

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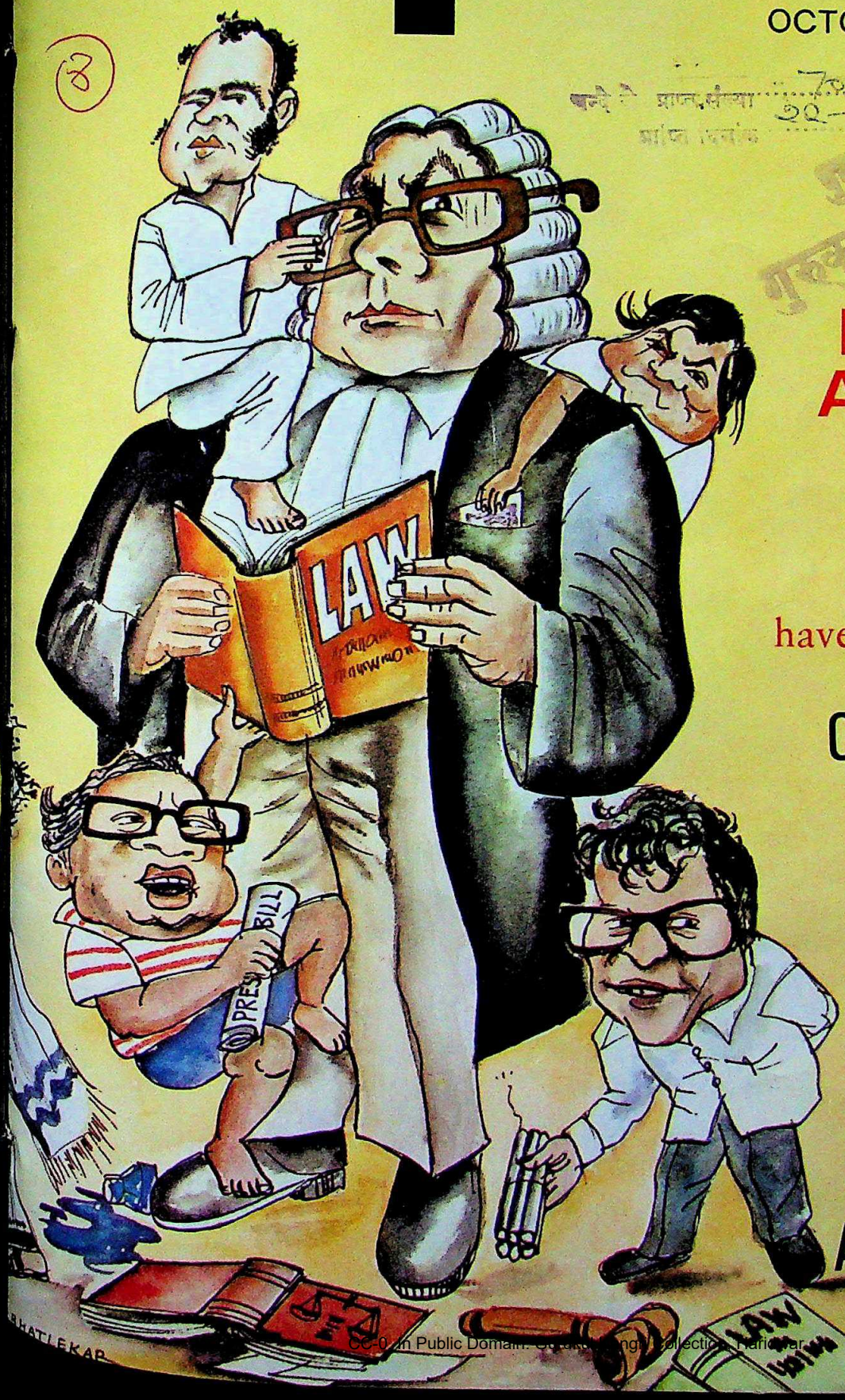

Are Politicians Above The Law?

How Jagannath, Antulay, Sanjay and the rest have foiled the courts

Clashes In The PUCL

Heroin Smuggling: The Indian Connection

Getting Back At Their Critics:

Shyam Benegal, Dom Moraes and others

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on the marquee

AS THE ARMS RACE between the countries of the world escalated from the late '40s, making the waging of wars between nations almost inevitable, people everywhere began to accept the armed conflicts which ensued as just that, inevitable.

You do not have to be old today to have lived through the war in Korea, the war in Vietnam, the war in Cambodia, the war between India and Pakistan, the war between China and India, the wars between Egypt and Israel, the many wars between the Arabs and the Jews, the war between Pakistan (W) and Pakistan(E). So used are we to wars all around us that one has to be physically shaken up these days to be reminded that there is a suicidal war going on for more than three years between Iran and Iraq which has claimed nearly 500,000 casualties and over US $100 billion in cost. There is war in Afghanistan, a war in Chad, a war in Lebanon, wars in Africa, many wars in Central and Latin America.

One reason why we have learnt to live with war and 'we' includes those unfortunate to be directly involved, is the ever-present fear of a super-power war. At least *that* war is being avoided, is the soothing reasoning. The well-publicised James Bond-like briefcase which follows the US President, the aircraft load of communications gear which followed Brezhnev's forays abroad, the deliberate leaks from Washington and Moscow, from London and Paris about how very securely secure the nuclear button is, have helped keep sanity in a bellicose world full of nuclear weapons ready on their mounts and capable of destroying the world a hundred times over in less than an hour. The media have helped too, with their 'balance of power' tranquilliser.

But suddenly, Moscow has revealed that the Kremlin button is not all that secure. . .

Let us accept the less sinister Soviet version of their shooting down of the Korean Boeing 747. From their own account, it is obvious that they had difficulty in locating the strayed aircraft in *their* airspace.

Question: How efficient is Soviet surveillance? How reliable is the Soviet equipment?

From their own account, it is clear they did not think it was a civilian airliner. In fact, the 'full and correct' version the Russians have delivered to their own people carries a veiled hint that the Soviet security forces feared that the plane was carrying something sinister and was secretly, almost defiantly flying over the Soviet Union's most sensitive nuclear weapons- testing site and towards an even more sinister goal or target.

Question: If the Russians thought the plane was carrying the unmentionable* or was on an Israeli-raid-on-Baghdad kind of destroy mission**, was shooting down the aircraft over their own territory, thus risking a fall out, the only means of stopping the mission? The Kremlin says the decision to stop the flight was taken by commanders in the Soviet Far East and the Kremlin was informed at the 'appropriate time'. God help us!

The straying of the Boeing 747 deep into Soviet airspace, the failure of the Russians in tracking it for a long time, the failure of the Americans and the Japanese to warn the Boeing that it was off course and finally, the shooting down of the plane by the Russians, demolishes the finely-tuned 'balance of terror' theory. What is to be universally feared now is the terror of error. And the inevitable can only be avoided by total, world-wide banning of nuclear weapons.

R. V. Pandit

* The Russians have claimed and the Americans have not denied, that nuclear weapons-armed aircraft of Strategic Air Command of the United States Air Force routinely fly close to Soviet borders.

** An option many countries have discussed in their strategic thinking.

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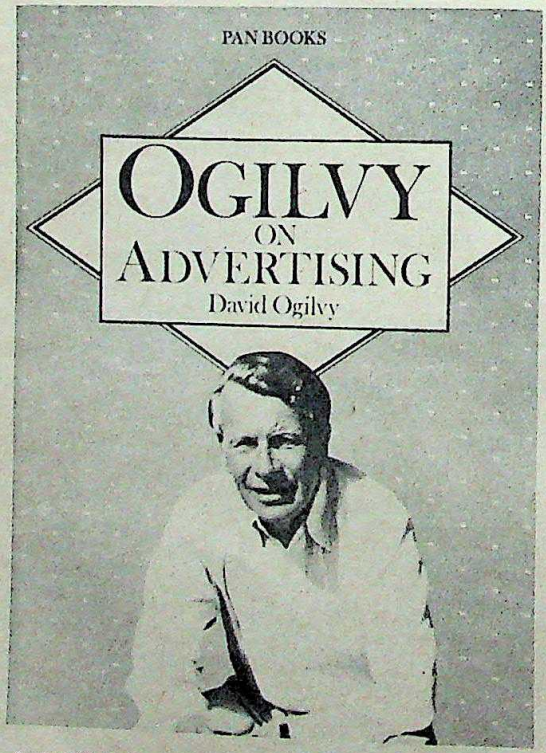

David Ogilvy is an advertising legend. Born in England and educated at Christ Church, Oxford, he went to New York in 1949 to found an advertising agency — with $6,000 and no clients. Since then he has built Ogilvy & Mather into the fourth largest advertising agency in the world, with 141 offices in 40 countries. Today, both inside and outside the high-pressure world of advertising, he is universally recognised as one of the major influence in shaping advertising techniques since the war.

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Published in 1983 by Pan Books, London, **OGILVY ON ADVERTISING by David Ogilvy** consists of 224 pages. It is lavishly illustrated (many in colour), is 9-¾" x 7-¼" in size, and has soft covers. Price: Rs.113.30 (subject to change without notice). Carriage Rs.15 will be extra where applicable.

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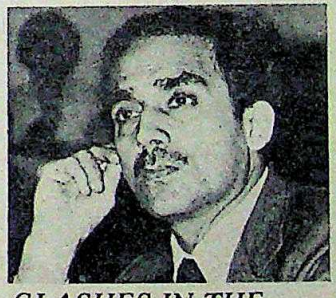

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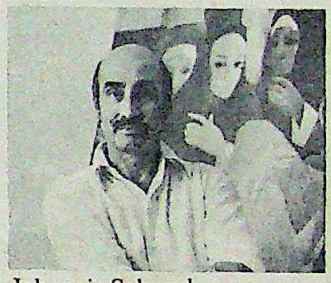

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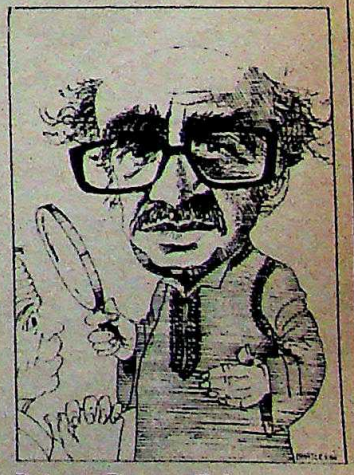

Bejan Daruwalla's predictions for October.

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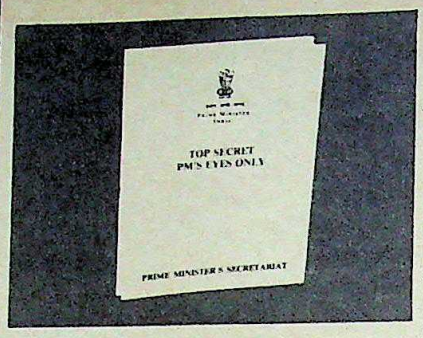


The Morarji-Sanjiva Feud

The Morarji Papers (August 1983) has been the first scoop in recent months to be published in your magazine and I enjoyed it very much.

While your article conclusively proves that Reddy acted very ambitiously, I do not understand why Arun Gandhi should hold Mr Desai beyond reproach. Reddy's letters clearly say that there was enough reason for doing so.

John M Jacob
Hyderabad

Your excellent report on the relationship of Morarji Desai and Reddy was informative as well as investigative.

I believe that Morarji would have done far better as a Prime Minister if he had a co-operative President. I really appreciate the justice you have done Morarji Desai by publishing this article.

Hiren Pathak
Sarigam - Gujarat

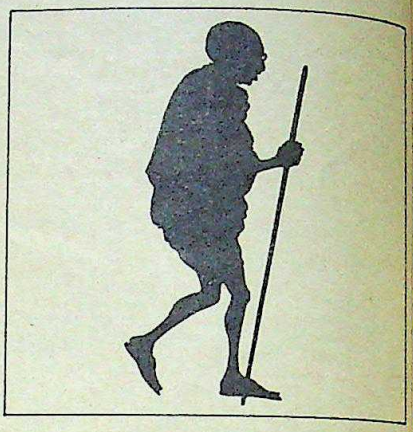
Your article on *The Morarji Papers* albeit well delved into, maligned the image of Mr Desai. Compared to the manipulations taking place at the highest bureaucracy today and to what took place before the Janata government, this will prove to be a drop in the ocean.

Prakash Chandra Jha
Giridih -1 .

The Morarji Papers is interesting not because it exposes some top secrets which, in normal course should have been added to the piled-up dustbin of our political history, but because it brings to light some grandiose projects of our ex-president.

If the things written are correct, Mr Reddy should give a public explanation for his calculated plot. The entire episode gives us one more proof that the Janata could not stand it's term not merely because of its own infighting. Every self-proclaimed Gandhian holds under his cap plans detrimental to the interests of democracy.

US Iyer
Madras -2



Koestler On Gandhi

Congratulations for reprinting Koestler's candid article on Mahatma Gandhi, all the more necessary at a time when the Mahatma cult is spreading in India and abroad. Gandhism is recommended by many as a panacea for all economic, political and social evils. Arthur Koestler's article should make us take a rational view of Gandhiji's teachings.

MS Ajgaonkar
Bombay -66

With regard to truth and perspective it is very difficult to disagree with Koestler. If only Gandhi had listened to Dr Margaret Sanger and urged the people to take to family planning, India might have been a great nation today.

Jaganmay Mitra
Calcutta-31.

Apropos Koestler's feature, I find it necessary to mention that his statement that Nirmal Kumar Bose's book, *My Days With Gandhi*, was manoeuvred out of circulation, is untrue. When I first read of it in 1970 in Koestler's own book *The Lotus And The Robot*, I was curious to read it. I found the book in the unrestricted loan section of the Central State Library at New Delhi, owned and managed by the Government of India.

What's more, the book had been acquired in 1954 and lent 74 times till the date of my borrowing it. I have found it necessary to bring these facts to the notice of the reading public to dispel the canard that the book was

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weeded out of circulation.

PN Duda
New Delhi -69

Koestler's *The Yogi And The Commissar* (August 1983), is the first truly balanced article I have come across about the Mahatma.

One should appreciate and revere Gandhi only for giving us the concept of truth, non-violence and self-respect. *Brahmacharya*, uncalled-for-fasting (which is being largely abused now) and his obstinacy should be accepted only as idiosyncracies.

Samir Sahu
Muzaffarpur -1.

India's Top Columnists

Dhiren Bhagat's assessment of India's top columnists (August 1983) successfully highlights the truth that once a writer 'arrives' in Indian journalism even the nonsense he churns out gets published. Behram Contractor and Dom Moraes are prime examples. It is time our editors did something about this. As Bhagat says, bright new columnists must be soon discovered. But how far is Bhagat different from the Reigning Dozen?

Bhagat gives us good, clean prose and purely as a stylist he is a pleasure to read. But he badly needs to cultivate tolerance towards persons and things he disagrees with. In *The Sunday Observer* (August 14, 1983), for instance, he calls his reader 'an idiot', the *Sunday* magazine 'a political rag' and former Justice Krishna Iyer a 'celebrated windbag'. If he is able to restrain the tendency towards intellectual exhibitionism and outgrow his puerile cocksureness he will soon be a force to reckon with. Else he will only meet, perhaps prematurely, the fate of the very writers whom he has so correctly assessed.

CG Pradeep Kumar
Bombay-69

The article by Dhiren Bhagat is an eye-opener to Bhagat's fans. By criticising such infamous journalists of India he has impressed a few but has annoyed the readers largely.

VK Ganti
Bhopal

Bhagat On Shourie

Dhiren Bhagat's review on Arun Shourie's book *Mrs Gandhi's Second Reign* is merely a rehash of the same old arguments. Some months ago, I wrote to the *Sunday Observer* and called Bhagat a fool: not as an abusive term but because his arguments were foolish.

Bhagat asks Shourie to stick to what he is good at. What may I ask is Bhagat good at? Certainly not at talking on Arun Shourie. This requires more than being a Sai Baba devotee and a hack.

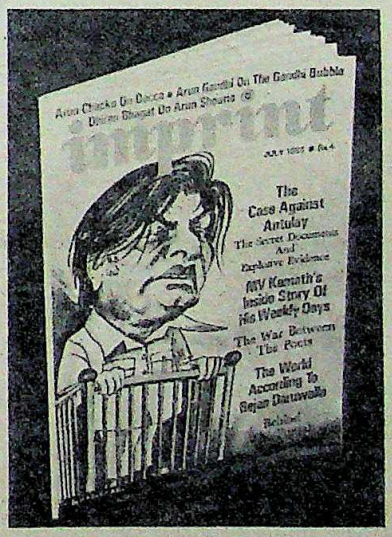
C Anthony Louis
Bombay

Shourie has never called himself a political philosopher or an investigative journalist. He writes because of his genuine concern for declining standards in India.

Let me come to the point. Everybody knows that the problem in Assam is genuine. It is only because of the foolish handling of the situation by Mrs Gandhi that economic and political considerations led to communalism.

Shourie merely questioned the wisdom of holding elections at such a time. There was no question of defending or attacking the RSS.

K Bhaskar
Karur



Adventures At The Weekly

Mr Kamath's article (July 1983) should have been titled *Agony At The Weekly*. He has tried to defend himself and goes on to claim that he was a success as editor, but not many will agree.

While in office he was haunted by the shadow of his predecessor and now needs to abuse him. Some of his claims are questionable while his comparisons are debatable.

S Choudhary
Bombay

The popularity of the *Weekly* during Khushwant Singh's editorship was not due to the 'bare breasts and buttocks' journalism as Kamath claims, but due to the spice and substance it contained which catered to a wide group of readers.

The fact that Khushwant Singh's column *With Malice Towards One And All* is still syndicated in three leading newspapers is a testament to his popularity.

George S Coelho
Bombay

Kamath seems to have turned into a megalomaniac!

MS Basu
Bombay

I recently renewed my **Imprint** subscription for three years. After reading Kamath's article, I consider it a wise investment!

N Gupta
Farakka

It was time that MV Kamath set the record straight. For too long has his tenure at the *Weekly* been unfairly criticised.

V Mishra
Cuttack

I never read the *Weekly* when Khushwant Singh was editor. After Kamath took over, I began to glance at it.

It was not a great magazine, but it was what Kamath says it was—simple, decent and sincere.

T Pillai
Madras

The Punjabi culture of people like Khushwant Singh is, it seems, missing from the pages of your magazine.

It was refreshing to read the views of a good man like MV Kamath who brought taste and decency back to the *Weekly*.

AD Joglekar
Poona

Reading MV Kamath's article it is clear that a talented and highly qualified person gets rejected but a man who can please the bosses by unfair means gets all facilities and betterment in service. The unfair treatment accorded to Kamath is shocking.

BN Bose
Jamshedpur

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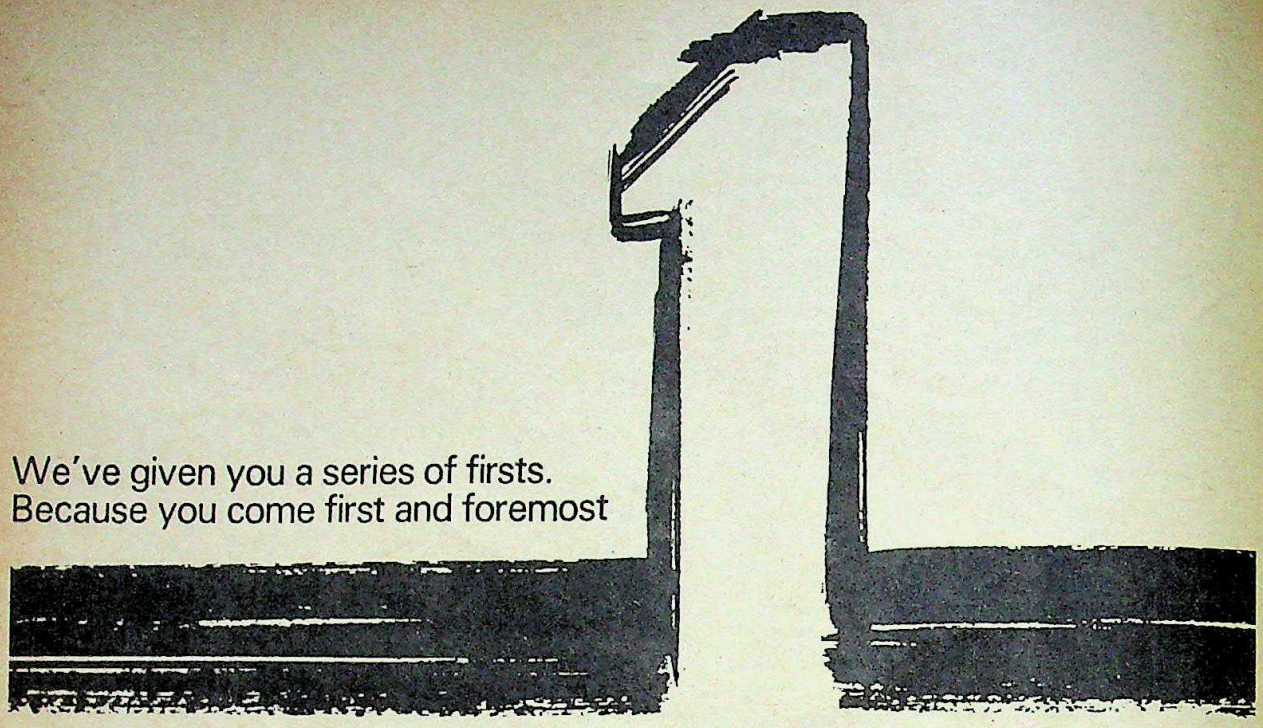

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FOLLOW-UP

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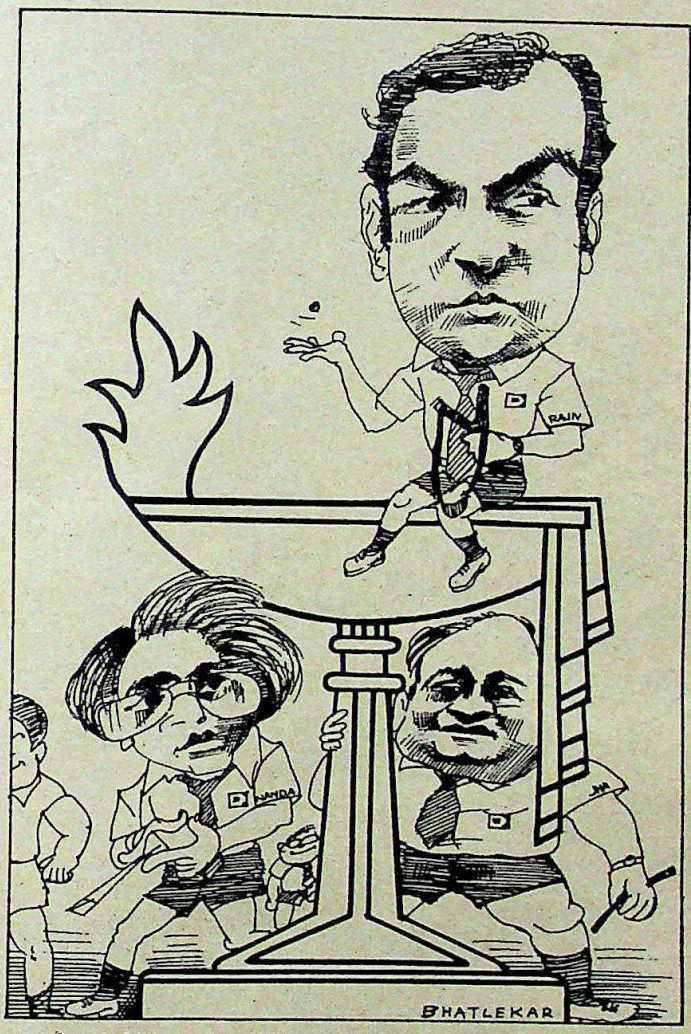
BY MALAVIKA SANGHVI

THE NETWORK IN ACTION

Old Doon School buddies gang up against Swraj Paul.



WHAT DO THE following have in common: Rajiv Gandhi, Arun Singh, Arun Bharat Ram, Vivek Bharat Ram, Rajan Nanda, Prem Shankar Jha and Swaminathan S Aiyer?

If your answer is that all of the above were involved in the Swraj Paul take-over affair, then you are partly right. The two Bharat Rams are sons of Dr Bharat Ram, Chairman of DCM while Rajan Nanda is Managing Director of Escorts. And as everybody knows by now, DCM and Escorts were the two companies that Mr Paul wanted to take over.

Rajiv Gandhi, MP and his close associate Arun Singh were the two men that the Escorts and DCM managements turned to when it seemed that Mr Paul's bid might succeed. And sure enough, Rajiv Gandhi then made a speech in the Lok Sabha in which he said that overseas Indians should not be allowed to take over Indian companies.

Swaminathan S Aiyer is a distinguished economics writer who ran the first series (in the *Indian Express*) on take-overs and came out against the Paul bid. Prem Shankar Jha is Senior Assistant Editor of *The Times of India* and a vociferous critic of both Swraj Paul and non-resident take-overs. When Mr Paul was asked what he thought of the criticisms of Jha and Aiyer, his reply was unprintable.

So, all of these people were involved in the Paul affair and yes, they were all opposed to Mr Paul's take-overs.

But there is another, more subtle, connection. In May 1983, **Imprint** ran a cover story on the Doon School Network. "Every Doon School student," the story claimed, "is a member of a network so strong yet so invisible that its workings are often insidious and intriguing." And by some remarkable coincidence, all of these people happen to have been at Doon during the '50s. Rajiv Gandhi was there from 1955-60, the same years as Arun Singh. Of the Bharat Rams, Arun was a couple of years senior but Vivek was there from 1955-61, as well. Swaminathan Aiyer was at Doon from 1953-59 while his fellow journalist Prem Shankar Jha spent the years 1950-54 there. And Rajan Nanda joined the year Jha left (1954) and left in 1960 along with Rajiv Gandhi and Arun Singh.

The Doon School network in action? Well, yes and no. It is unlikely that a journalist like Jha was motivated solely by the fact that he was at school with the sons of the families who had the most to lose if Mr Paul's take-overs went through. The same is true of Aiyer, though perhaps, the similarity of their backgrounds (both went on to read Politics, Philosophy and Economics at Magdalen College Oxford) might explain some of the similarities in their views.

On the other hand, it seems fairly clear that the Bharat Rams and Rajan Nanda lost no time in getting in touch with those Doon School boys who now occupy positions of influence in Delhi. It is widely believed that Rajiv's Lok Sabha statment asking for a ceiling on foreign shareholdings was prompted by requests from his Doon School buddies.

Of course there are other factors to be considered. It is entirely possible that because of his brilliant analytical ability and his well-known intuitive grasp of economics, Rajiv Gandhi may have come to the same conclusions even if somebody hadn't told him what to say. And, it is also possible that Nanda and the Bharat Rams may have dashed off to 1, Safdarjang Road to plead their cases simply in their capacities as citizens of India.

But, if one is to be realistic, then there can be no denying that the Doon School connection worked once again. In assuming that his millions and his vociferous support of Mrs Gandhi gave him exclusive access to the PM's House, Swraj Paul forgot that among the Indian elite, there are subtler and deeper loyalties.

And in the end, he was nearly beaten by an old school tie. ◆

Malavika Sanghvi wrote the Doon School Network, **Imprint's** *cover story in May 1983. She is a Bombay-based freelance writer.*

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BY ARUN CHACKO

NEPAL'S POWDER KEG

The idyllic Himalayan Kingdom seems set to explode.

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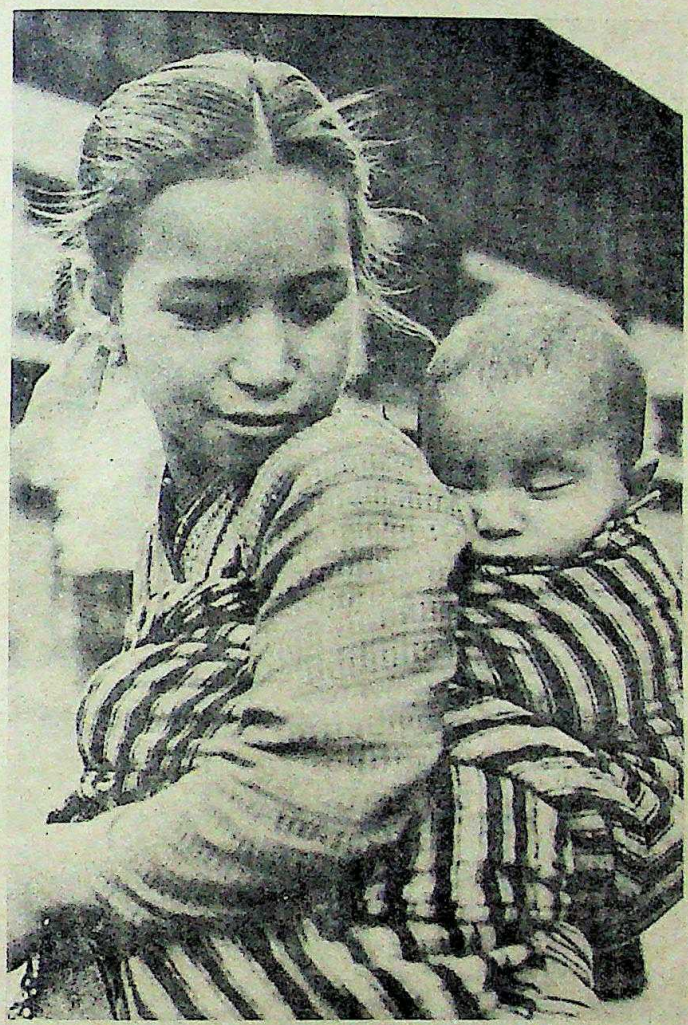
IN ANCIENT TIMES, so the story goes, the exquisite 14-square-mile Kathmandu valley was a huge lake. The *Vipaswa* Buddha, wishing to behold its magnificence, decided to visit. Finding it extraordinarily beautiful, he threw a lotus seed into the lake, which bloomed into a multi-coloured 'Lotus of Light'.

Several centuries later, Manjushri, the great Manchurian Buddhist saint, passed the spot and saw the wonderful lotus. Stunned by its scenic beauty, he wanted to make the spot accessible to pilgrims, so he took his sword, cut a gap in the surrounding Himalayan mountains and drained the lake.

Back in 410 AD King Prachandra Deva recognised a goldmine when he saw one. He built a stupa around the 'Lotus of Light' in order to protect it. That marked the beginning of Nepal's tourist industry! And it has continued to grow ever since.



Unfortunately, little else seems to have progressed. If King Prachandra Deva returned today to visit his erstwhile subjects and ignored a few scattered buildings like the King's new palace, the hotels Soaltee Oberoi or Everest Sheraton, he would feel quite at home.

Much of Nepal's charm to the non-Indian outsider lies in its very primitiveness and unchangeability. (The Indian mainly goes to snap up forbidden foreign goods!) And that doesn't seem to have altered much over the centuries.

In the late '60s, when it was the undisputed 'hippie capital' of the world and one went to whiff the drug scene and hopefully ravish some hapless, western woman, Kathmandu looked pretty and sleepy—when the filth was not noticeable. Since then, Delhi, Bombay or Bangalore have changed radically. But not Kathmandu or Nepal.

The all-powerful King rules with an iron hand, there is no industry worth the name, the people are still miserably poor and most kids have ballooning bellies full of worms. The only jobs outside government seem to be in the tourism industry, which tragically results in bright university graduates becoming tourist guides (if they are lucky).

With that kind of future, the innate friendliness, gentleness and courtesy of the Nepalese is under some strain. The resentment against a system so weighted against the mass of its people is undoubtedly growing. In the absence of any safety valve like periodic democratic elections, it seems a matter of time before the volcano begins to rumble.

* * *

FIVE HUNDRED AND thirty kilometres east of Kathmandu, at the end of a harrowing 14-hour overnight bus ride on a winding, hilly and uneven track, is the Nepalese border town of Kakarvitta. Though approached through spectacular, lush forest with the Himalayas silhouetted in the background, Kakarvitta would have remained yet another sleepy little foothill town in the normal course of things. But it happens to border Naxalbari, Bagdogra, Siliguri and on to Darjeeling 50 miles away. So in a sense its strategic importance is assured.

The first thing which occurs on alighting dog-tired and unwashed from the smelly, much-abused Tata 'Deluxe' bus is a virtual gherao. A horde of young men warns you of the perils of confronting the Indian customs on the other side, with even something as harmless as a foreign-made umbrella. Of course in the same breath they offer to immediately deliver anything to you on the other side for a small fee.

All they do is walk a couple of hundred yards down the unmanned border and cross with all those foreign goodies intact. Naturally international trade at that point—mainly outside government concurrence—has always been considerable.

Now Darjeeling district is largely populated by Indian Nepalese. Tradi-

Arun Chacko is Associate Editor of Boston's The World Paper. He is based in Delhi and writes frequently on subcontinental affairs.

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For the most part Nepal has been hospitable to Indians. But that era might end.

tionally huge numbers from both sides (including a lot of Indian traders) freely crossed the border without any travel documents. Suddenly in late August some bloody-minded Indian officials at Kakarvitta were provoked into first, sending back and later arresting, 33 Nepalese for lacking Indian permission to enter the area.

Admittedly, some places along the Sino-Indian border including Darjeeling district were declared restricted areas in September 1976, but the recent action can only be put down to official perversity. For good reason, the rule was never permanently enforced for Nepalese. Surely India has enough problems with its neighbours, not to want to add to them.

* * *

FOR THE MOST part Nepal has been extremely hospitable to Indians. The huge Indian population permanently living there has, on its own admission, little cause to complain. But that era might be coming to a close.

That almost every second shopkeeper in Kathmandu is Indian tells its own story. And Indian labourers are everywhere. But few people were ready for a horrifying statistic being bandied about in the increasingly hostile Nepalese press. It says that of the kingdom's 15 million people, all of five million are Indian.

Not only are they reportedly taking a lot of jobs away from the increasingly indigent local people, it claimed, fully 60 per cent have Nepalese citizenship. (Shades of Sri Lanka?) This has already led to demands for work permits for foreigners.

It's impossible to assess the extent of Indian immigrant control on the Nepalese economy, though a recent claim of roughly 80 per cent would appear to be on the high side. However, it could well be anything between 30 and 50 per cent, which still is a lot.

In any case several million Indian livelihoods are involved. There are hundreds of thousand Indians making a living selling Indian goods in Nepal, shuttling backwards and forwards each week.

Indo-Nepalese relations might not be quite teetering on the brink. But there are plenty of irritants and the Chinese influence is considerable. India cannot afford relations getting worse. If they do, Sri Lanka's Tamil problem will look like a minor inconvenience in comparison.

* * *

THE HIPPIE 'HURRICANE' which swept the west's youth in the late '60s had more or less exhausted itself in the Kathmandu valley (and Goa's beaches) by the early '70s. Most of those young people returned home—many of them to become conventional pillars of society, highly successful stockbrokers, lawyers, businessmen and the like. But just as every invasion results in a few permanent settlers, this was no different.

Several hundred of them are still in Kathmandu, a lost generation, now approaching middle age. Some still into spiritualism, others drug addicts. Many of them are bright and articulate, unable to really justify their current existence, but equally unable to return home and pick up the broken threads of their long disrupted lives.

But not everyone is a drug addict or a spiritual dilettante. Quite a few have become serious, well-respected Buddhist *bhikshus* and others tantrics of one kind or another.

However, none of them have the spiritual eminence of a 14-year-old American boy—formerly Ossian Kennard now Sangje Nyenpa Rimpoche—who has been training to be a Buddhist monk for ten years and now speaks better Tibetan than English. He is believed to be a reincarnation of the great Manjushri himself and, according to the Kargyupa sect of Tibetan Buddhism, is the sixth highest ranking lama in the world. That apart, he is the most serious, well-spoken and charming teenager I've ever met. ♦

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BY DARRYL D'MONTE

A CREDIBILITY PROBLEM?

Who would you rather believe—AIR or the Times of India?

ONE OF THE most startling findings of the **Imprint***: PATHFINDERS media poll (Cover story,* **Imprint,** *September 1983) is that even privately-owned newspapers and magazines have poor credibility. Only 24 per cent of respondents said they 'fully believe' newspapers and only 15 per cent said they 'fully believe' magazines. An overwhelming majority (about 70 per cent) said they 'partly believe' what they read. In comparison 40 per cent of the same respondents said they 'fully believe' the news on Doordarshan and 34 per cent said the same of news on AIR.*

Of course the credibility ratings of the state-run media cannot be simplistically compared with those of privately-owned newspapers and magazines. Firstly the standards of 'credibility' applied to the private media are arguably quite different from those applied to the state media. (Only Mrs Gandhi and the extremely naive would argue that AIR is, more credible than, say, India Today.*) Secondly the questionnaire did not mention any particular newspapers or magazines—it covered the entire gamut of the Indian press from the* Times Of India *and* India Today *to* Sun *and* Current.

Nevertheless, it is safe to assume that a great majority of readers perceive the Indian press to be far less accurate and objective than they expect it to be. A senior journalist analyses this phenomenon:

* * *

ABOUT A DECADE ago, I received an interview with a woman who was supposed to be a faith-healer from a small town in Andhra. I was looking after the Sunday Magazine of *The Times Of India* then and I published the piece, taking care to insert the word 'claimed' in the introduction. In my innocence, I thought that would be sufficient to put the woman's alleged powers in the correct perspective.

I must have received about 600 letters, asking for her address in Andhra. I was shocked—this was perhaps the real 'power of the media'! I consigned all the letters to the wastepaper basket till they stopped altogether. A little while later, however, an officer from the *Times* advertising department came and asked me for the address, mentioning that his wife had been paralysed for 12 years and he wanted to take her to Andhra.

"You surely don't believe all that?" I asked incredulously. His response was even more shocking: "But it's published in *The Times of India*!" If I, who had carried the piece, couldn't convince someone who worked in the very same office, what about thousands of other readers?

I cite the anecdote because to my mind it shows two things. In a poor and semi-literate country like India, the printed word itself carried a great deal of weight—much more than we journalists imagine. More significantly—and that is of greater concern in this article—the medium is as important as the message when it comes to credibility. Could you picture the same person saying, for example, "But it's published in *The Free Press Journal*?"

I suspect it's because all the newspapers have been lumped together that they, as a homogenous group, come off so badly in the opinion poll. There's a huge gap in credibility, for instance, between the *Times* and *Daily* in Bombay. Perhaps those who were interviewed for the poll in this big metropolis thought of those massive, and very often misleading, headlines when they were asked to comment about newspapers.

The four big national dailies and the *Hindu* enjoy a reputation for credibility because they take more pains to report accurately. Some of them, particularly the *Times*, can be treated as newspapers of record. And a newspaper like the *Hindu*, however drab and unenterprising, becomes an institution in its own right, which is why people want to know what it says.

They can all be faulted, though,

Darryl D'Monte, a former Resident Editor of the Indian Express, *is currently a Homi Bhabha Fellow. He is media columnist for* Sunday.

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Quality and credibility are not necessarily linked as the Statesman-Telegraph *battle shows.*

for sins of omission rather than commission. Content to subsist on hand-outs for most of the time and not prepared to run any risks, they err on the side of sobriety, not sensationalism. The readers know what they are looking at every morning isn't the whole truth, but it is nevertheless very largely part of the truth. The trouble with less professionally-run dailies is that even a hand-out can be misreported!

There is also a difference between what people actually *read* and what they *trust*. While tabloids like the *Daily* and *Mid-Day* are thriving in a city like Bombay, it is a mistake to imagine that their believability is very high. People read them for a variety of reasons—because they're physically easier to handle, especially in a city with a huge commuting population; because they're much more exciting than the staid big dailies. But when it comes to anything vital—starting with births, deaths and marriages!—they will inevitably turn to a paper of repute.

This brings us to what the pollsters say about magazines: how come they're rated even poorer than the newspapers, assuming the findings are correct? It's the same principle all over again: they are booming because they are bolder, brasher, with more pictures and better lay-outs. I'm referring more specifically to the glossies, which people buy much as they do an ice-cream (they cost about the same!)—for pure enjoyment and little else! (I think the best expression for them is the celebrated cry of Bombay's *channawala*: "Time pass, Time pass!") They mushroomed after the emergency and they've never looked back.

The newsmagazines do try and sneak between the lines, as it were. Only *India Today* and *Sunday* succeed in doing so and their credibility is very high indeed. Time was when these magazines dutifully followed up a stray item in a newspaper; the days aren't far off when the reverse will happen—that is if the editors of daily newspapers allow their more enterprising reporters the freedom to chase as chase can. In any case, the most energetic newsmen are fast being snapped up by magazines.

I think the argument has been most neatly illustrated by the case of *The Telegraph* which MJ Akbar has now been running for a year in Calcutta for the Ananda Bazar Patrika group. Although the object of the whole exercise was to take on that old fuddy-duddy, *The Statesman*, it simply hasn't set the Hoogly on fire. The reason? *The Telegraph*, however much it may look like a brown sahib's version of the London *Times* (typographically, that is) is more of a magazine than a newspaper. People, and especially the *bhadralok* of the country's former capital, still expect certain things in a daily—almost as if they want to be bored! And even the editorials, which *The Telegraph* restricts to a solitary performance instead of the threesome which is the daily diet of the rest, are apparently so badly missed that the readers of the *Statesman* can't be coaxed to switch. Full-page feature articles, on the lines of what the *Guardian* in London used to call 'extra', are also deterring readers. Which is the better paper? *The Telegraph*. Which has more credibility? *The Statesman*.

And so the final point which the opinion poll makes: the alleged superiority of the electronic media over both newspapers and magazines. I think this finding is highly suspect. Since Mrs Gandhi has been very cautious not to restrict the freedom of the press ever since she burnt her fingers during the emergency, only the gullible would state that radio and TV present a more accurate picture of the state of the nation. As a matter of fact, it would probably be true to say that the press has never enjoyed more freedom in post-independence India than it does today. One has only to read the avid give-and-take over Shourie's exposés of newsmen in Kashmir themselves, which were endorsed by the Editors' Guild, to realise this.

The only explanation for this finding that I can possibly trot out, if I try hard enough, is that the electronic media—like established dailies—are believed to be more accurate because they report such banalities that they are inevitably correct. True journalism lies not in parroting pronouncements by all and sundry on the most mundane of subjects—all of which are entirely faithful reproductions of what was actually said!—but in uncovering the truth behind these platitudes. The fact that in any crisis—even something as down-to-earth as a police riot in Bombay—people are let down by the state-owned media (which is all they can turn to for immediate information) speaks for itself. Last year, the BBC reported actual localities in which trouble had erupted in this city within hours of their occurrence.

I'm hardly surprised, therefore, that the BBC comes off so well. The figures of its audiences throughout the world are truly revealing. Last year, a record 100 million people—one out of 45 in the entire globe—tuned in to the overseas service. No fewer than 35 million adults hear the Hindi service regularly, which contrasts sharply with the reception accorded to the propaganda unleashed by Radio Moscow (five million Hindi listeners) and the Voice Of America (3.5 million).

I don't know how many here tune in to AIR and switch on their TV sets for the news every day. The figures will be higher, I'm sure, but there's not the slightest doubt that what Auntie BBC says is taken far more seriously than anything that voice of All Indira Radio may be droning, day in and day out. It would be interesting for a Pakistani pollster, if at all the breed does exist in that beleaguered country, to find out how many of his countrymen are tuning in to the BBC news religiously every morning these days. . .

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BY TRAVESH SINHA

THE CASE AGAINST HANGING

How can a Liberal support the death penalty?

IN A SENSE, hanging and affluence are linked. As countries get richer, they tend to abolish the death penalty. Today, there are only three significant industrialised nations that still use the death penalty in peacetime: Russia, South Africa and the United States.

The Russians shoot around 400 people a year (excluding those in civilian airliners, of course) for such offences as speculation, selling for profit or dealing in shoddy goods. South Africa executes a 100 people a year—only ten are white. In the United States, the death penalty was brought back in 38 states after a Supreme Court ruling in 1976. Since then only seven people have been executed and there are moves to have capital punishment struck off the statute books.

Elsewhere, the death penalty is the sort of punishment that neo-fascists and intolerant bigots advocate. The only two Western European states to retain it are Ireland and the Isle of Man and it has been 20 years since anyone was hanged in either of those countries. There is no death penalty in any Latin American state and there is no clamour to re-introduce it.

Among poor countries, hanging is more popular. In Pakistan they've been known to hang former Prime Ministers. But as nations become more affluent, they begin to have second thoughts. Hanging remains on the statute books in Singapore and the Carribean countries but there are strong abolitionist movements. And in Japan, there is now only one hanging a year.

In some ways, India is an international curiosity. Despite being a poor country, we pride ourselves on our liberal values. We allow free speech, guarantee equality before the laws and try and protect our minorities. But when it comes to the death penalty, we are curiously illiberal.

It is probably fair to say that there is no widespread feeling against hanging. Most Indians are in favour of capital punishment and so is a large section of the legal establishment. The lawyers who recently tried to get the Supreme Court to strike down the death penalty, are probably in the minority.

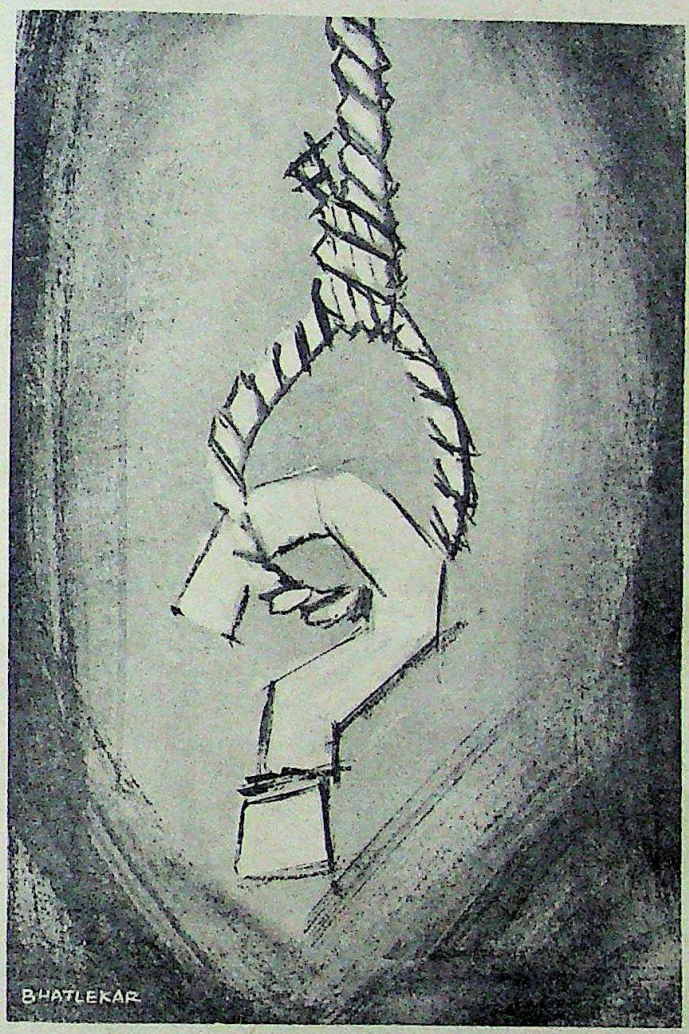
Moreover, many distinguished legal personages are firm believers in hanging them high. They see no contradiction in, on the one hand, opposing preventive detention, fighting for human rights and asserting the inalienable right of slum dwellers to make their homes on the pavement; and on the other, lending intellectual weight to the case for judicial murder.

Of course, we have our fair share of nuts. One notable lawyer told me that it was justifiable to hang people because prisons were overcrowded and we had to get rid of convicts somehow. He was not joking. Others argue without reference to reason. They talk about the horrors of bride burning, the murders committed by the likes of Billa and insist that there must be retribution.

I have no quarrel with people who believe that the function of punishment is revenge, pure and simple. Or with those who would solve our overcrowding problems by killing people off. They would not call themselves liberals, would not subscribe to the basic values of liberal society and there is therefore, no basis for discussion.

My quarrel is with those who do call themselves liberals and claim that support for hanging is entirely consistent with their other liberal beliefs. Such people have always struck me as being essentially confused. To justify a rather primitive desire for revenge, they tend to misuse liberal arguments.

Let us consider 'liberal' justifications for hanging. The case is usually based on three grounds. Firstly, all punishment is a deterrent. Hanging is the ultimate deterrent, so it is justified. Secondly, punishment must fit the scale of the crime; hanging is the appropriate punishment for murder. And thirdly, that in a democracy, even if some squeamish people oppose hanging, the fact that the majority supports



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Travesh Sinha, a long-time opponent of the death penalty last wrote about it in **Imprint,** *April 1982.*

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We are repelled by blinding criminals but approve of breaking their necks.

it is justification enough.

To take the deterrence argument first. The liberal justification for punishment is that we do not jail a man simply to get even, but to make society safe. Not only is society protected from that individual criminal, but the treatment meted out to him serves as an example to other would-be criminals and deters them from breaking the law.

As a justification for punishment in general, deterrence is logical and reasonable. But is there any evidence that the death penalty acts as a greater deterrent? Most murders are committed in the heat of the moment and the question of retribution does not really enter the murderer's head.

There is also statistical evidence. In countries where the death penalty has been abolished, the murder rate has not gone up as a result. In other words, the absence of this alleged deterrent has made no difference. Moreover, those states of America with the death penalty do not have fewer murders than those without. In fact, there is no evidence at all that the death penalty functions as a deterrent.

On the contrary, there is a likelihood that the death penalty encourages some murderers. Psycopaths like Gary Gilmour actually want to end their lives in a blaze of glory: even now there are convicted men in America who are fighting for the right to die. Terrorists welcome martyrdom. In Northern Ireland's Maze prison, IRA men fast till death, just so that they can be said to have died for their cause.

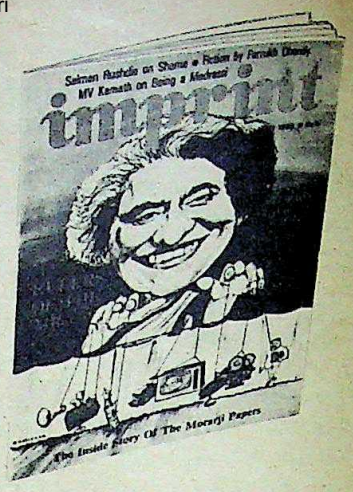
Once it is shown that capital punishment is not a great deterrent, it becomes difficult for liberals to support it. They can fall back on the 'punishment-must-fit-the-crime' justification, but this lacks weight. Of course, the scale of the punishment must match the scale of the crime—the penalty for armed robbery must be greater than that for ticketless travel. But we do already draw a line at certain kinds of punishment. When the Saudis chop off the hands of thieves, we do not call the punishment 'an appropriate one'. Instead, we term it barbaric. When somebody suggests blinding criminals, we are repelled.

Our reactions suggest that intuitively, we do draw the line at any kind of irreversible physical chastisement. Even those of us who are not revolted by societies that flog offenders, are appalled by those that mutilate them. But surely, it is inconsistent to regard a society that cuts off a man's fingers or pours acid in his eyes as 'barbaric', if we regard breaking a man's neck and killing him as 'civilised'?

It is also absurd to justify the death penalty by reference to the majority principle. A liberal society is not just a democratic one. Taken to its logical extension, the majority principle would allow 51 per cent of the population to kill the other 49 per cent. A liberal society must grant all citizens protection from the tyranny of the majority. Hitler probably had majority support, Ayatollah Khomeini certainly does. So though a majority of the population may favour killing certain people, a liberal cannot really be swayed by the intolerance of the majority.

Can there be any other liberal justifications for the death penalty? I've heard it said that by killing somebody, an individual 'loses his right to life'. This is hardly a liberal argument. Society does not grant people the right to live and it has no business deciding when certain individuals have forfeited it. Others say that murderers of the Billa-Ranga class must be kept away from society for they would corrupt other prisoners. Even if this is true, all it suggests is that they should be kept in solitary confinement for life.

So why then are so many Indians in favour of hanging? My feeling is that we have not thought enough about the subject and that we tend to be swept away by emotion. Otherwise, we would follow most civilised, liberal societies and stop using murder as a means of upholding law and order. ♦



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BY HUKUM SINGH

THE PUNJAB INJUSTICE

A sympathetic view of the Punjab agitation.

WITHIN A YEAR after Independence, Punjab was to be betrayed and discriminated against, on the linguistic issue, while all the remaining states of India were poised for their constitutional right to their language and their linguistic state. I may quote Pandit Nehru's remark in 1948, ". . . there is no question of rectification of Punjab's boundaries. . . .whatever the merits of such a proposal might be ...." While Nehru was known for his flexibility, on the Punjab issue he remained stubbornly dogmatic and negative. This became the future policy. Nehru stuck to it for 16 years. Shastri continued the same; and Indira Gandhi has made no departure.

After denying this fundamental linguistic right for many years, Prime Minister Shastri appointed a Parliamentary Committee, in October/November 1965, under my chairmanship, to prepare a report on Punjabi Suba issue. This was done in accordance with the fresh promises made to the Sikhs during the September 1965 war with Pakistan. The intention of the Government then was to use me against my community, secure an adverse report and then reject the demand even after 18 long years of deliberate, frustrating delays. When my report was nearly ready Mrs Indira Gandhi went to Mr YB Chavan and said she had heard that Sardar Hukum Singh was going to give a report in favour of Punjabi Suba and that he should be stopped.

Lal Bahadur Shastri continued the policy of Jawaharlal Nehru and was dead against the demand of Punjabi Suba, as was Nehru. So, when he was urged by Mrs Gandhi to stop Hukum Singh, he did not waste any time. Mr Shastri called Mr Gulzari Lal Nanda, then Home Minister, to his residence and conveyed to him his concern about the 'feared' report. Every effort was made by Mrs Gandhi, Mr Shastri, and Mr Nanda to stop me from making my report. But when nothing succeeded, the Congress forestalled the Parliamentary Committee while the committee report was signed on March 15, 1966, a week later. So it is not a fact that the recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee were accepted, as stated by Indira Gandhi on November 26, 1982. It was a deliberate attempt to bypass this Committee and undermine its importance. Why the Government had been so strongly against the Parliamentary Committee making a report in favour of Punjabi Suba, and why Mrs Gandhi had tried to stop Hukum Singh, has been explained by Mrs Gandhi. She says that she did not want to let down Hindu support in Punjabi Suba. Does this mean that because of Hindu votes in Punjab the Congress has to do injustice to the Sikhs?

The Parliamentary Committee had come to these conclusions: (1) The present State of Punjab be reorganised on a linguistic basis; (2) The Punjabi region specified in the First Schedule to the Punjab Regional Committee Order, 1957, should form a unilingual Punjabi State. The Government bypassed the Committee and forestalled its report. The subsequent reference to the Shah Commission was loaded heavily against Punjab. Making the 1961 Census as the basis and the *tehsil* (instead of village) as the unit, was a deliberate design to punish the Sikhs. Since the language returns in the 1961 Census were on communal lines, hence Punjabi-speaking demarcation had also to be on a communal rather than on a linguistic basis. Consequently merit was again ignored and justice denied. Naturally tensions between the two communities increased. If Punjabi Suba had been demarcated simply on a linguistic basis and not on the false returns of 1961, there would not have been any extremist movement. Tension between Hindus and Sikhs in Punjab is certain to continue unless the communal section of Hindus see the light and retrace their steps by acknowledging Punjabi as their mother tongue. ♦

The late Sardar Hukum Singh was a Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Governor of Punjab.

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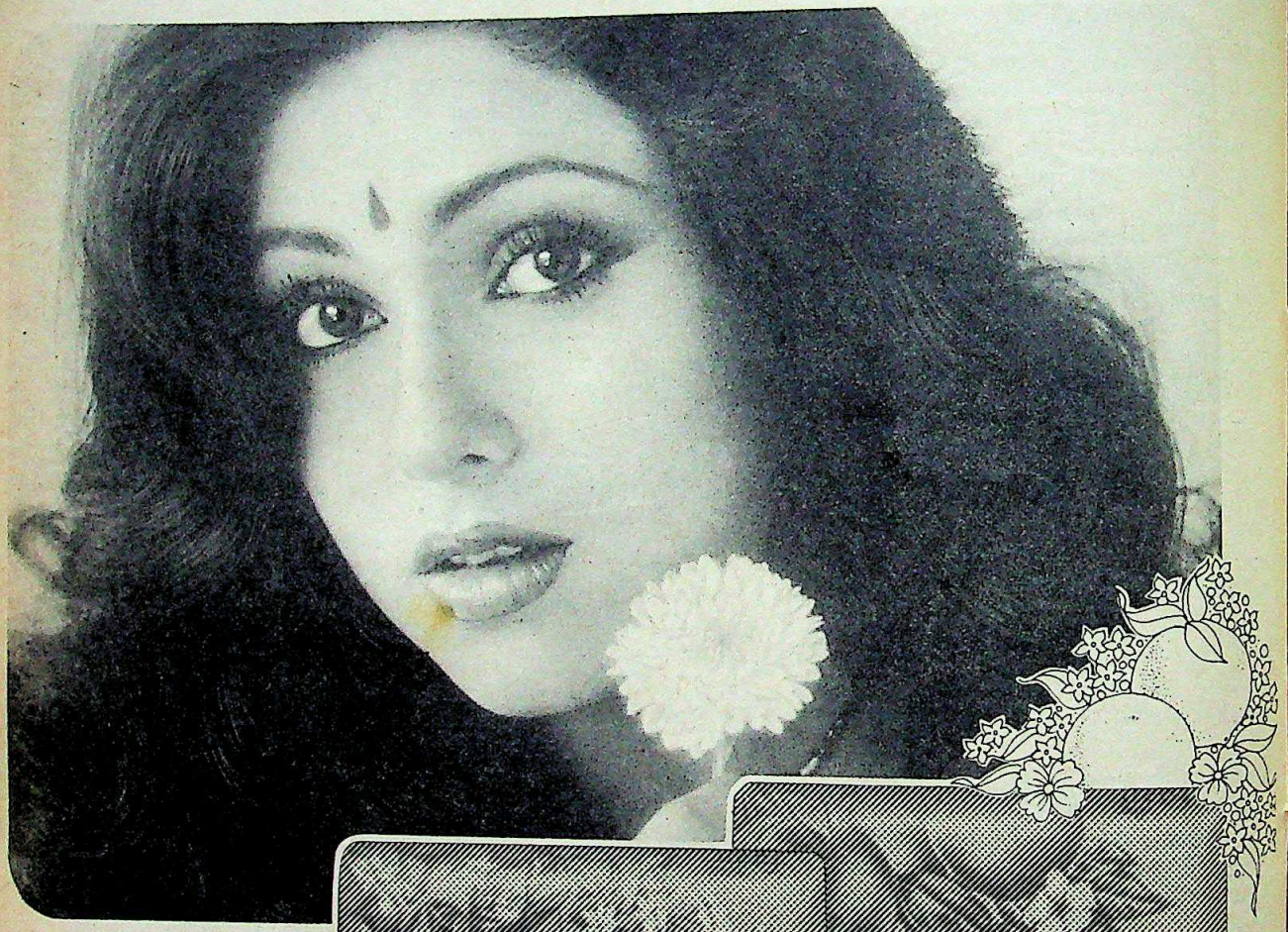

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INSOLENCE BEFORE JUSTICE

India's corrupt politicians are beyond the purview of the law

By A G Noorani

"Depthless cowardice before power and limitless insolence before justice are the constants of the political behaviour of the Indian people."

–Nirad C Chaudhuri, *Hindustan Standard*, October 13, 1969.

IMPLICIT IN THIS STATEMENT is a telling comment on the failure of the Indian legal system as well. It has dismally failed to check abuse of power by the powerful. Worse, it has allowed them to get away with impudent insults to the judicial system. There are some fine instances of courageous judgements. But the Indian legal system as a whole, holds few terrors for the power-drunk politician.

"With us every official, from the Prime Minister down to a constable or a Collector of taxes, is under the same legal responsibility for every act done without legal justification as any other citizen," Dicey wrote of the English legal system. "The Law Reports abound with cases in which officials have been brought before the courts and made, in their personal capacity, liable to punishment or to the payment of damages, for acts done in their official character but in excess of their lawful authority."

Can we say this of our legal system in actual practice? There have been Commissions of Inquiry galore. But they can only expose, they cannot punish. There is not one instance of a politician whose career was terminated as a result of a Commission's censure; none whatever of a politician being made to suffer imprisonment for the misdeeds thus exposed. The labyrinths of the law do not exactly ease the course of a citizen who pursues a public wrongdoer. There are, besides, the famous cases of withdrawals of cases. And if the Governor of Haryana can pardon a mere Deputy Superintendent of Police, Parmanand, who was convicted and sentenced to three month's imprisonment and a fine of Rs 500 for beating up processionists–a sentence confirmed by the Supreme Court–who can be sure that this power will not be used to pardon politicians of consequence to the ruling party?

THE ANTULAY CASE PROvides an excellent instance of the frustrating obstacles which beset anyone who tries to bring to book a politician who is reasonably suspected of having committed grave offences.

Two years ago–on September 11, 1981 to be exact–Ramdas Nayak filed a criminal complaint in the Court of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate accusing AR Antulay of carrying out, in conspiracy with others, 'a scheme of self-aggrandisement involving obtaining of funds from the members of the public' through the medium of the trusts he created and controlled and by abuse of his powers as Chief Minister in respect of certain matters: allotment of cement, industrial alcohol, liquor licence, permission to construct buildings and let out premises and fixing the price of sugarcane and sugar manufactured by the co-operatives. Under each of these heads, the complainant set out the full details of pay-

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ments–dates, amounts and cheque numbers–as also the facts regarding the creation of the trusts.

Antulay was accused of committing various offences under the Penal Code, Section (S) 161 (public servant taking gratification other than legal remuneration in respect of an official act); S 165 (public servant obtaining valuable thing without consideration, from persons concerned in the official business transacted by him); S 384 (extortion) and S 420 (cheating), as also 'criminal misconduct', an offence under S 5 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947. That includes habitual acceptance of illegal gratification as also obtaining any valuable thing by corrupt or illegal means or by abusing his position as a public servant. But, S 6 of the Act lays down that no court can take cognisance of an offence under S 5 or under S 161 and 165 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) without the sanction, in the present case, 'of the authority competent to remove him (the public servant) from his office'.

The magistrate ruled that the complaint was, therefore, not maintainable in the absence of such sanction except insofar as it related to S 384 (extortion) and S 420 (cheating). Nayak challenged in the High Court the requirement of a prior sanction as being unconstitutional, while Antulay and the State Government contended not only that a sanction was imperative but that it could only be accorded by the State Government through its Law Minister, i.e. by the Chief Minister. (In effect–Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister.)

Earlier, on January 12, 1982, Justice B Lentin of the Bombay High Court had allowed a writ petition filed by PB Samant, Mrinal Gore and Kamal Desai challenging Antulay's methods of cement allocation. He held that cement allocations had been granted to builders as a *quid pro quo* for their donations to the Antulay trust.

Antulay: getting away.

Antulay resigned as Chief Minister but his successor Babasaheb Bhosale appointed him as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the State's Irrigation Development Corporation on January 25, 1982 in order to extend to him the protection the law affords to 'public servants' from accountability.

Antulay as well as the State Government appealed to the High Court against Justice Lentin's judgement. On June 10, 1982 a Division Bench, consisting of Justice SK Desai and Justice BJ Rele, dismissed the appeal. But the proceedings in the writ case were not taken into account by the other Division Bench, consisting of Justice BC Gadgil and Justice Kotwal, which heard arguments on the necessity for prior sanction in the criminal case pending before the Magistrate.

Antulay has gained two precious years and it remains to be seen if the case will be heard.

On April 12, 1982 they ruled that the question of sanction can be decided only by one who is manifestly independent and unbiased; in the case of a Chief Minister, it can only be the Governor of the State acting 'in his individual discretion and without the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers'. Additionally, the court held that the Governor's refusal to accord sanction is open to judicial review.

Against these rulings Antulay appealed to the Supreme Court which admitted the appeals but refused to grant a stay of the criminal case. Meanwhile, following the Court's ruling, Governor IH Latif gave the sanction. Antulay resigned from the Chairmanship of the Corporation. But this did not make things much easier for the complainant, Ramdas Nayak, either. (Forget the technical arguments about the appointment of a Special Judge to hear the case under the Prevention of Corruption Act.) Antulay argued that since he was a mere MLA now, the Governor's sanction did not matter. The sanction of the State's Legislative Assembly was required.

The Bombay Special Judge, RB Sule upheld this contention in July 1983 to the dismay of all. The Supreme Court has admitted for a full hearing Nayak's appeal. Sule's judgement in effect makes the ruling party the arbiter of whether one of its members should be prosecuted or not–with equal liberty, of course, to make a similar decision in regard to a member of an opposition party!

Antulay has gained two precious years and it remains to be seen whether Nayak's case will be heard and decided on the merits before the next general elections.

The sanction provisions are an anachronism. Besides S 6 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, there is another, wider provision. Section 197 of the Criminal Procedure Code, 1978, likewise makes a sanction of the appropriate Central or State Government necessary before a 'public servant' in its employment is prosecuted in respect of any 'offence alleged to have been committed by him while acting or purporting to act in the discharge of his official duty'.

ELSEWHERE IN THE country, another former Chief Minister has not been able to avail himself of the sanctions plea because he does not belong to the ruling party. On September 2, 1983, the Special Judge, Bhopal, ordered the attachment of all bank accounts and shares of companies in the name of former Janata Chief Minister VK Saklecha. The economic offences wing of the State Police had filed a charge-sheet against Saklecha in the court of the District and Sessions Judge, Bhopal, last February under S 5 of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The police investigations had reportedly shown that there was a 'sudden and rapid' accumulation of assets by Saklecha and his family to the tune of Rs 35 lakhs between June 1977 and January 1980. The Saklecha family opened 28 new bank accounts in this period, while they had reportedly only eight bank accounts before he came to power.

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Jagannath: scot-free.

Likewise, M Karunanidhi was sacked as Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in January 1976. Five months later a First Information Report (FIR) was filed against him alleging various offences under the Penal Code (Sections 161, 468 and 471) and under the Prevention of Corruption Act. Two cases were registered. The Janata government refused to withdraw them though it withdrew the cases against PS Badal. Karunanidhi forged an alliance with Indira Gandhi on the eve of the January 1980 Lok Sabha election.

On May 13, 1981 the cases against Karunanidhi were withdrawn on the CBI's application. The background to the withdrawal shows that it was inspired by political motives. Soon after sacking Karunanidhi, Indira Gandhi had appointed a Commission of Inquiry, consisting of Justice RS Sarkaria of the Supreme Court, to inquire into the charges levelled against him way back in 1972. In June 1977 the Commission stated: "On November 17, 1970, Shri Karunanidhi abusing his official position, as the Chief Minister of the state of Tamil Nadu, accepted, through his Private Secretary, Vaithialingam, a sum of Rs 25,000 as illegal gratification, from HP Rao, Managing Director of Pushpaka Aviation (Private) Limited, Bombay, as a motive or reward for awarding to the said company spraying contract during the year 1970-71 in respect of an acreage of 1.5 lakhs at the rate of nine rupees per acre, a rate which was in excess of what that Company itself had originally quoted." The details of other payments are set out in the Report. All in all, 'the actual amount paid to the Chief Minister through Vaithialingam was Rs 1,42,273'.

The Commission also held that Karunanidhi and his colleague Anbil Dharmalingam had 'attempted to stall, thwart and frustrate the investigation' of the case which the CBI had registered against them for these offences on April 5, 1973. Justice Sarkaria held that the charges had been proved 'by cogent, convincing and reliable evidence'.

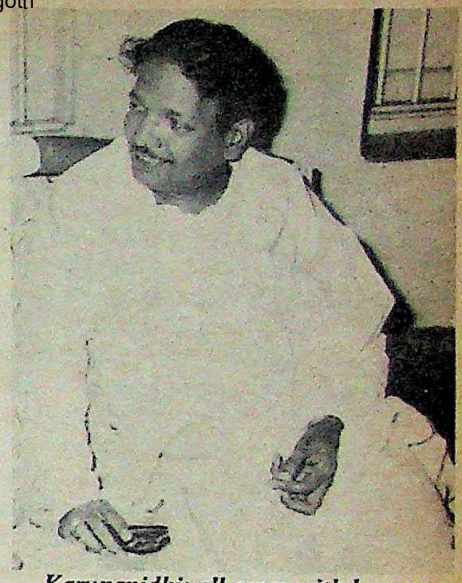
On May 13, 1981, the CBI successfully sought from the Court the withdrawal of this very case and another in which Karunanidhi was charged with accepting a bribe of Rs 3.5 lakhs from wheat dealers 'as the first instalment'.

The Supreme Court will hopefully review the law relating to the withdrawal of criminal cases. On January 28 this year the Court admitted an appeal against the withdrawal of prosecutions against Nandini Satpathy, former Chief Minister of Orissa, on charges of corruption. The appeal has been referred to a larger Bench comprising at least five judges. The Supreme Court has also allowed a review petition against its majority judgement delivered last December in the Jagannath Mishra case upholding the withdrawal of a case against him and others.

Justice Baharul Islam upheld the withdrawal of cases against Jagannath and then joined the Congress(I).

In February 1979 a charge-sheet had been filed against Dr Mishra, Nawal Kishore Sinha and four others after obtaining the Governor's sanction. AK Datta was appointed Special Public Prosecutor. The accused were charged with grave offences like forgery, cheating, conspiracy. Dr J Mishra was additionally charged with criminal misconduct under the Prevention of Corruption Act for abusing his position as a public servant to subvert a criminal prosecution and thereby obtain pecuniary advantage for himself or others.

No sooner did Dr Mishra return to power in June 1980 than a policy decision was taken by his Cabinet to withdraw cases launched 'out of political vendetta'. On February 25, 1981 the Secretary to the Bihar government informed the District Magistrate, Patna, of the decision to withdraw the cases against Mishra. A new Public Prosecutor, LP Sinha, had been appointed only the day before and he formally applied for withdrawal of the case on June 17, 1981. The Special Judge gave his consent. The High Court in revision confirmed the order. The Supreme Court, by a majority of two (Baharul Islam and RB Misra JJ) to one (VD Tulzapurkar J) upheld the High Court's order. Not long after the judgement was delivered, Baharul Islam resigned from the Supreme Court to become a Cong (I) candidate in the Assam elections.



Karunanidhi: all cases withdrawn.

The Supreme Court itself is responsible for the present unsatisfactory state of the law on the subject. In 1980 it lumped the Baroda dynamite case with the cases against Bansi Lal and upheld the withdrawal of both in a single judgement. The two cases were basically dissimilar. The first, as the Court recognised, concerned a political offence. The other was palpably devoid of any political complexion. It concerned the demolition of a building out of sheer private vendetta because the owner, Manohar Lal, had refused to sell land to Bansi Lal's son and a relative.

The withdrawal of the Baroda dynamite case was upheld because the very order sanctioning the prosecution itself showed that the object of the accused was *exclusively* political—'to arouse resistance against the said, emergency'. 'Political offences' are a well-recognised legal concept. No such

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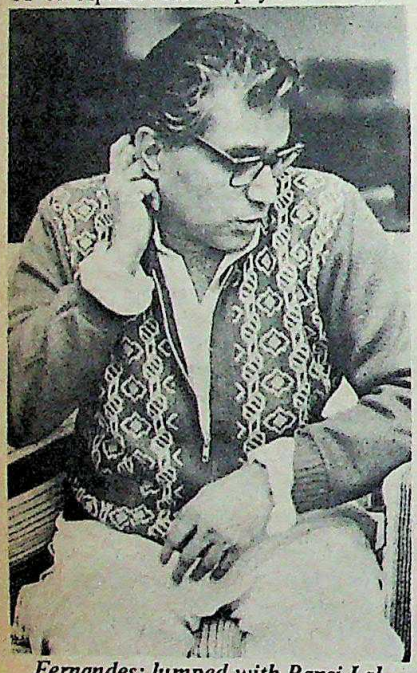
question arose in Bansi Lal's case, of course. There was nothing political about the destruction of Manohar Lal's properties. The motive imputed to Bansi Lal was mere private vendetta.

The Supreme Court, nonetheless, upheld the Public Prosecutor's action in withdrawing the Bansi Lal case 'in view of two outstanding circumstances'. One was that the State Government had decided to withdraw only four out of 25 cases against Bansi Lal and others. The other was that the complainant had received his land back and also compensation for the demolition.

The judgement was delivered on May 2, 1980. By then a few other cases too had been ordered to be withdrawn—eight cases on February 1 and 11 on April 3. As for payment of compensation for the demolitions, the Supreme Court overlooked the clear findings of the Jaganmohan Reddy Commission of Inquiry: "On the evidence, it appears clear that the destruction and demolition of shops, residential houses, temples, *samadhis* and other properties in Bhiwani of Shri Manohar Lal and his sons was not at the instance of the Bhiwani Improvement Trust.



Fernandes: lumped with Bansi Lal.

"The demolitions were, however, at the instance of Shri Bansi Lal who, as Chief Minister and subsequently as Defence Minister, being frustrated at not obtaining the properties of Shri Manohar and his sons for his son, Shri Surinder Singh, and his brother Shri Raghubir Singh, to build a five-star tourist hotel and an air-conditioned cinema by them respectively at a throwaway price, abused his position as a person in authority and with vindictiveness, malice and cussedness, had the properties demolished through Shri Surinder Singh." Can the owner's compromise with the Trust absolve Bansi Lal and Surinder Singh of a criminal offence?

INDIRA GANDHI'S GOVERNment lost little time in launching a veritable 'operation withdrawal' as soon as it assumed power in January 1980. The Kapoor Commission's report notwithstanding, the Rewasa murder cases against Surinder Singh, son of Bansi Lal, were withdrawn on May 17 and 23, 1980. So too, despite the Shah Commission's report, were the cases concerning the Turkman Gate and Arjun Nagar demolitions, on June 28, 1980.

On May 24, 1980, the Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, SM Aggarwal, dropped the proceedings against Indira Gandhi, RK Dhawan and PS Bhinder in the Sachar detention case. He said, "When the prosecution in the instant case is itself not interested in launching criminal prosecution and is not able to ensure the success, it would be just futile for the court to direct the prosecution to file the charge-sheet for taking cognisance of the alleged offences and order a trial which in all probability is likely to be protracted and agonising." Surely, the Court could have ordered the police to investigate the offences or at least *censured* the prosecution.

Dhirendra was accused of embezzling and illegally importing cars and a plane.

The court refused to hear two of the detainees concerned who wished to oppose the CBI's application. It opined, "Prima facie, sufficient material, both on facts and law, warranting taking cognisance is not disclosed." The Shah Commission's report documents the charge to the hilt on the basis among others, of the evidence of District Magistrate Sushil Kumar.

On the same day, May 24, 1980, the cases in respect of the detention of opposition leaders on trumped-up charges were also dropped. The Shah Commission had censured these arrests. The worst in the series was the withdrawal on June 7, 1980 of the cases against Sanjay Gandhi which were a sequel to the Report on Maruti Ltd, made by a sitting judge of the Supreme Court, Justice AC Gupta.

Cases against Dhirendra Brahmachari, in which the charges ranged from embezzlement of government funds to illegal import of two Mercedes Benz cars and an aircraft from the US, were withdrawn. Sundry officials too went scot-free. The Youth Congress (I) workers, Devendra Pandey and Bhopal Pandey, who had hijacked a plane, had been rewarded with tickets for the State Assembly. Later, in November 1980 the cases against them were withdrawn.

Satpathy: getting away.

What does this record of withdrawal of cases and partisanship in prosecutions speak for our system of criminal justice? The damage it has suffered in recent years is incalculable, possibly irreparable. For this, it is the judges who are largely to blame, as the tortuous course of the *Kissa Kursi Ka* case clearly illustrates (See box).

ONLY ONE ENDOWED with phenomenal industry and with the patience of Job can keep abreast of the myriad Commissions of Inquiry set up

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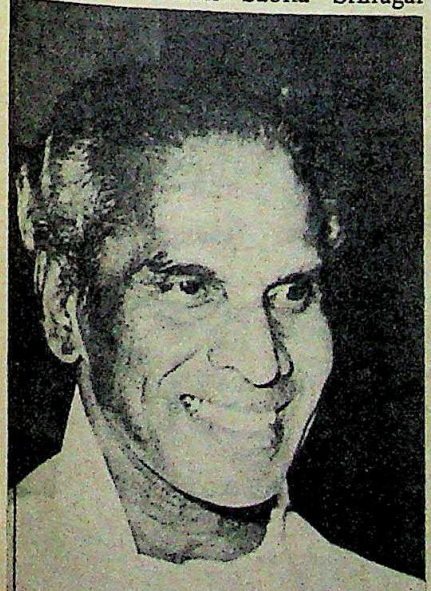
since Independence. The Judges who served on them have acquitted themselves creditably. It is the Government *and the people* who have failed. *Both* have ignored the Reports and their findings.

For long the Nehru government studiously refrained from instituting independent probes into charges of corruption. The most notorious case of such remissness was that of the Jeep Scandal involving VK Krishna Menon. Even the Report of the Congress Parliamentary Party's sub-committee indicting Menon was suppressed.

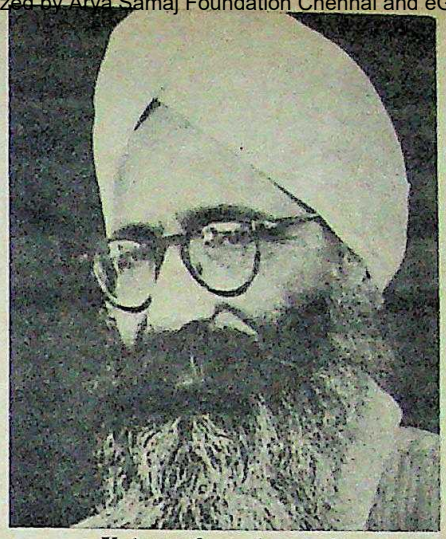
So was Justice SK Das's report on KD Malaviya's dealings with Serajuddin as a result of which he had to resign from the Union Cabinet in 1963.

The first Commission of Inquiry to probe into charges of misconduct against a Minister was the SR Das Commission in the Partap Singh Kairon case. It was submitted on June 11, 1964 just three days before Lal Bahadur Shastri was sworn in as Prime Minister. His first impulse was *not* to publish the Report but Kairon's conduct forced his hand. Published it was and Kairon had to quit.

The Ayyangar Commission was set up by the Sadiq government to bring to book a powerful political opponent, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed. His misdeeds were as egregious as his opponents' opportunism. The Report, submitted on June 30, 1967, found Bakshi guilty of gross abuse of power and of corruption. In 1971 Mrs Gandhi handpicked him as the Congress candidate for the Lok Sabha Srinagar



Menon: inquiry report suppressed.



Kairon: forced to quit.

constituency where he went down to a deserved and humiliating defeat at the hands of the late Shamim Ahmed Shamim.

Similar opportunism had been displayed in the Biju Patnaik case by the

Biju Patnaik got away scot-free despite the serious charges against him.

Janata and the Lok Dal leaders and, not least, by MC Chagla. On November 15, 1964 the Director of CBI submitted a report which recommended 'further inquiry to come to a definite and clear conclusion'. The charges were not 'unfounded, unsubstantiated or untrue'. A Commission of Inquiry should have followed as a matter of course. Instead, a Cabinet sub-committee was set up which, while making subdued criticisms, advised *against* the setting up of a Commission of Inquiry. One of its members, the Education Minister, MC Chagla, was most vociferous in defending this course and, by implication, Patnaik—"I would not hang a dog on the basis of an exparte statement like this."

True, Patnaik resigned from the only official position he then held—Chairman of the State Planning Board—and his Man Friday, Biren Mitra, from the Chief Ministership. But a full probe was deftly averted.

On October 26, 1967 Justice HR Khanna was appointed as Commission of Inquiry by the Singh Deo Ministry in Orissa. Patnaik was found guilty of grave improprieties.

Justice Khanna deplored that Patnaik should have "allowed such a sway to the pecuniary and business interests of the companies, which had been started by him and with which his family members were associated, in dealings with the State Government, that within two or three years of his stewardship his public image became tarnished and the hopes which were built around him, were shattered to pieces."

The manner in which Biju Patnaik as Chief Minister, palmed off to the state's Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) his Low Shaft Furnace Plant which was uneconomical was only too well-known. Justice Khanna said, "The position, as it emerges in the final analysis, is that Mr Patnaik was able to get rid of and pass on to the IDC the Low Shaft Furnace Plant, which in his own words was uneconomical and retain for his Company the mining lease, for the retention of which he was so keen that he had to file a writ petition in the High Court, even though the mining lease and the Low Shaft Furnace Plant were admitted by him to be linked together." Other improprieties were also found by the Commission.

In March 1977, Morarji Desai brushed aside the findings of the Khanna Commission and made Biju Patnaik a

(continued on page 23)

Bakshi: egregious misdeeds.

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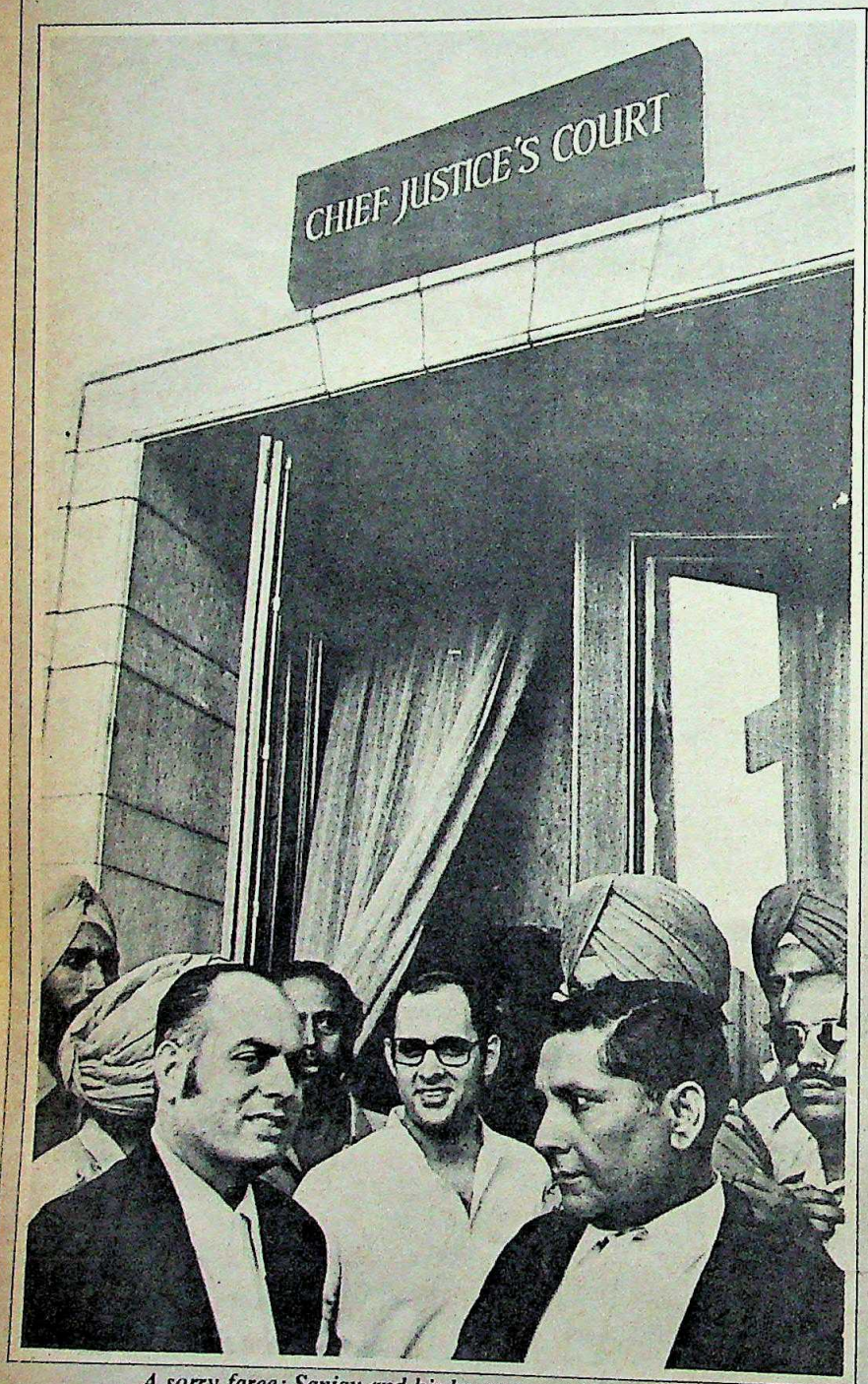
SANJAY AND THE LAW

The Kissa Kursi Ka Saga



A sorry farce: Sanjay and his lawyers outside the court.

The tortuous course of the* Kissa Kursi Ka *case clearly illustrates that the damage the court has suffered in recent years is incalculable.

THE SUPREME COURT had to intervene twice during the trial of the *Kissa Kursi Ka* case. Sanjay Gandhi tried to stall the proceedings. Rejecting his petition for leave to cross-examine witnesses in the committing Magistrate's court, Justice Krishna Iyer observed, "No party to a criminal trial has a vested right in slow motion justice since the soul of social justice in this area of law is prompt trial followed by verdict of innocence or sentence."

On May 5, 1978 a three-member Bench of the Court, consisting of Chief Justice Chandrachud and S Murtaza Fazal Ali and PN Shinghal JJ, cancelled his bail for a period of one month and directed that Sanjay be taken into custody. He had been found guilty of tampering with prosecution witnesses.

On February 27, 1979 the District and Sessions Judge, Delhi, convicted Vidya Charan Shukla and Sanjay Gandhi of entering into a conspiracy to destroy during the emergency the film *Kissa Kursi Ka* produced by Amrit Nahata, MP and of committing various other offences in consequence. They were sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment each and fines of Rs 25,000 and Rs 10,000 respectively.

On November 26, 1979 a Bench of three Judges of the Supreme Court consisting of Murtaza Fazal Ali, Kaushal and Kailasham JJ began hearing Sanjay Gandhi and VC Shukla's appeal.

It was partly heard when Mrs Gandhi returned to power. The Special Public Prosecutor, Ram Jethmalani, was willing to continue but he was asked to return the brief which he correctly did. Mr JS Wasu was appointed in his place. Meanwhile on January 29, 1980. NK Singh, DIG of the CBI and the investigating officer in the case, was arrested on the basis of a complaint filed three years earlier.

When the appeal reached hearing on February 21, 1980, VM Tarkunde appeared for NK Singh and sought leave to intervene. The intervention, he argued, had became necessary as after the change of government 'the accused had merged with the State'.

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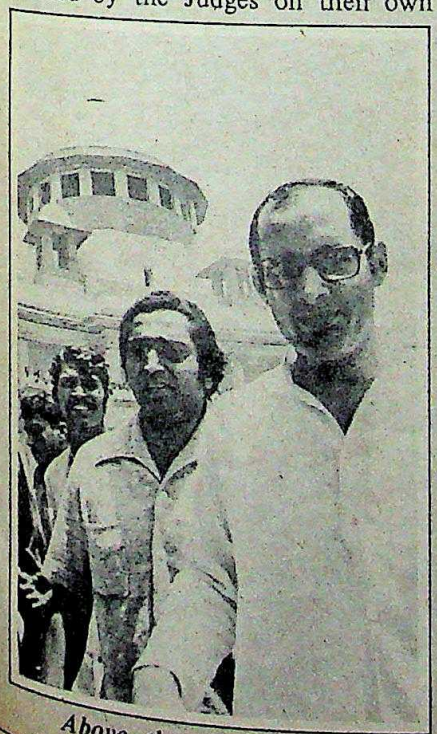
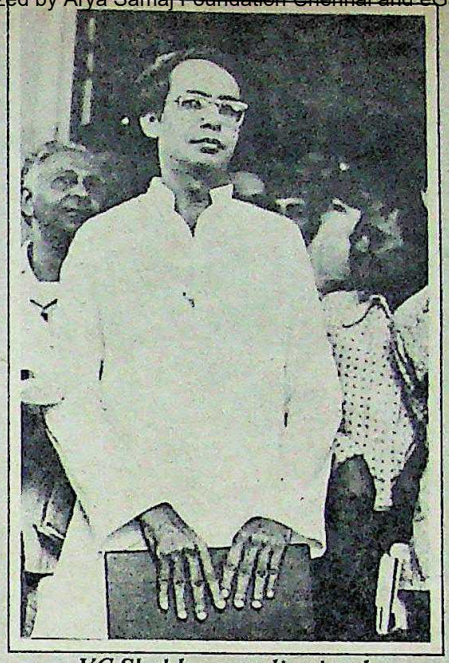
Further, in the course of the hearing, the Judges had made serious remarks against NK Singh and his conduct of the investigation. He could not instruct the new counsel, Wasu. The Judges, however, declared that they did not intend to make any remarks against Singh in their judgement. In case they did, they would call upon him to argue the matter.

Wasu's performance is set out in the PTI report on the proceedings very eloquently. "Mr Wasu, who folded up his arguments within 15 minutes in reply to the arguments advanced by Mr Rajinder Singh, counsel for Mr VC Shukla and Mr KL Arora, counsel for Mr Sanjay Gandhi, over the last three months, told the court that he had nothing more than what was already on Court's record to substantiate his case. He could not over-elaborate the points already made by the prosecution in the trial court." Justice Kaushal put a specific query: could he answer the defence argument about Sanjay Gandhi's absence during the dates on which the burning of the film was said to have taken place? Wasu boldly replied: "The burning of the film is not supported by any evidence." (*The Statesman*, February 22, 1980). When Wasu sat down, the Court reserved judgement.

The very next day the former Special Prosecutor, Ram Jethmalani said in a statement to *Deccan Herald*: "From my knowledge of the case I can say that vital evidence was neither noticed by the Judges on their own



Above the law?: Sanjay



VC Shukla: case dismissed.

nor pointed out by counsel for the State. Every criticism of the evidence by the accused had a fair explanation which required judicial consideration. The judges have shut their eyes to light when light was available in plenty. A terrible blow has been dealt to the dignity of the Supreme Court, the consequences of which will be tragic in the extreme." Wasu, he said, "chose not to address the court or attempt a defence of the trial court judgement or attempt to answer the judges queries which lays him open to the charge of lack of professional ethics."

On April 11, 1980 the Court allowed the appeals and quashed the convictions. This writer analysed the judgement in detail shortly thereafter in an article in *Economic and Political Weekly* (June 14, 1980) and exposed its infirmities.

Two passages in the judgement alone suffice to show the Court's approach: "We have heard learned counsel for the parties at great length both on the constitutional points involved in the appeals *and the facts* (emphasis added) . . . After having gone through the entire evidence, with the able assistance of Mr Rajinder Singh, learned Counsel for A-1 (Accused No 1, Shukla) *and of learned counsel for the State*. . ."

Both statements are a patently wrong description of Wasu's 15-minute performance. The record had run into 6,500 pages in 20 volumes. The trial Court's judgement was 300 pages long. The 44 pages of the Supreme Court's judgement make sorry reading. ♦

(continued from page 21)

member of his Cabinet which set up one Commission of Inquiry after another. Only in the case of his own son Kanti and himself was the demand for a Commission of Inquiry turned down.

Biju Patnaik still struts about as a *neta*. Nor was Dr Harekrushna Mahtab's political career much hampered by the Sarjoo Prasad Commission's finding that 'the acquisition of wealth by Shri Mahtab was much beyond his ostensible sources of income and must have been derived through unauthorised and illegal sources for which he has completely failed to account'. Mahtab was found guilty of accepting a bribe of Rs 2.5 lakhs in 1959 for showing favours to *kendu* leaf contractors.

Justice TL Venkatarama Aiyer found Mahesh Prasad Sinha, the strong man in KB Sahay's ministry in Bihar, guilty of the same charge. This was in two instances. In one he received a bribe of Rs one lakh, and in the other of Rs 75,000—both from the same contractor, MS Ramiah of Bangalore. Three contracts of works had been awarded to him in 1965. Sahay himself was found guilty of 'favouritism and abuse of power'.

The Commissions of Inquiry appointed by the Janata government were a varied lot. The Shah Commission was concerned with the emergency excesses. Three other Commissions dealt with charges against three Chief Ministers—Justice Jaganmohan Reddy on the doings of Bansi Lal; Justice AN Grover on those of Devraj Urs; and Justice JR Vimadalal on Vengal Rao. Of these, Vengal Rao emerged unscathed. The only findings against him were for using state machinery to accord a 'royal welcome' to Sanjay Gandhi.

Of Bansi Lal, Justice Reddy said, "The way in which Bansi Lal acted as Chief Minister leads one to examine how the whole elaborate machinery of administration can be subverted to suit the personal whims and objectives of a single person who is the head of the whole administration, viz. the Chief Minister." Several acts of gross abuse of power were proved. Devraj Urs was found guilty of favouritism and abuse of power.

But the ablest among the Commission of Inquiry reports is easily that of Justice AC Gupta of the Supreme Court on the Maruti scandal. He exclaimed, "What is remarkable is that Maruti Limited got away with every-

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thing. From the interest taken in Maruti's progress by men from the Prime Minister's Secretariat and the way even matters connected with the country's defence were subordinated to the interest of Maruti Limited and the prevailing sense of fear that prompted implicit obedience, one is left in no doubt as to the origin of the power that made such a state of affairs possible. Shri Sanjay Gandhi exercised only a derivative power, its source was the authority of the Prime Minister."

No holds were barred, no rules left inviolate. The concluding chapter of the Report remarked, "The affairs of the Maruti concerns, described in the previous chapters, appear to have brought about a decline in the integrity of public life and sullied the purity of administration."

The exposure in the Report invited attention to other aspects which, Justice Gupta said, deserved a detailed probe. "Evidence has been adduced showing that shares of Maruti Limited were allotted to persons who knew nothing about the transaction." Further, "In February 1977 large sums of money were paid out to fictitious persons as refund of their dealership reservation money or deposits made by them along with their alleged applications for Maruti shares. All these indicate the presence of unaccounted money." The Commission recommended a detailed probe of the records—'many more irregularities are likely to come to light'.

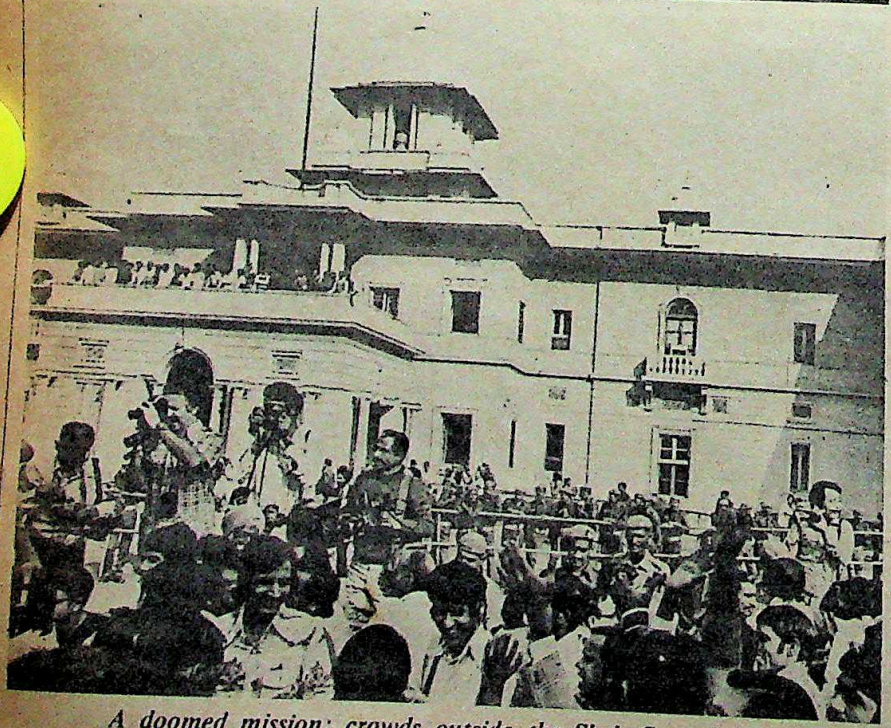
Kanti: exonerated?

The aftermath is well-known. On October 14, 1980 President N Sanjiva Reddy promulgated the Maruti Limited (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Ordinance, 1980. Maruti Ltd was nationalised. A sum of Rs 4.34 crores was to be paid to the Company as compensation.

Vaidyalingam exonerated Kanti but Morarji was clearly implicated.

CA Vaidialingam did not operate under legal sanction. His concern, quaintly enough, was with the *members of the families* of Messrs Morarji Desai and Charan Singh, *not with the doings of these two stalwarts*. It was an absurd approach. Consider this instance alone. One of the charges was the reversal of the import policy on polyester filament yarn on August 22, 1977 and the removal of the relaxation 11 days later on September 2, 1977. Among the firms which benefited during the brief interlude was a company with which a friend of Kantilal Desai was connected and the relaxation, allegedly, was at his instance. The record, however, does not disclose a shred of evidence against Kantilal Desai.

What the Report discloses is something more serious: "The Commerce Minister on July 26, 1977 agrees with the Department in refusing the request of this Corporation for import of polyester filament yarn. The then Prime Minister, father of Shri Kantilal M Desai, specially pleads for this Corporation. The Commerce Minister expresses inability on July 28, 1977 relying on rules and policy of Government. The policy is changed and this Corporation gets licence. Later, they have also been granted licence in December 1977." But Vaidialingam was concerned only with 'the part played by Kantilal M Desai by himself or through his father, the then Prime Minister' and recommended a probe. By any fair tests a probe against Kantilal Desai on this charge cannot be recommended since there is not a tittle of evidence to connect him. But prima facie evidence there clearly is against Morarji Desai against whom, however, a probe was not recommended.



A doomed mission: crowds outside the Shah Commission.

THE POST-1980 DOINGS OF politicians in power put the record of their predecessors in the shade. The doings have been relentlessly exposed in the press. But no libel suits have been filed although the law of libel in India is tilted in favour of the complainant. It is not enough in a criminal prosecution for libel to prove that the allegations are true. It is further necessary to establish that they are made for the public good. Truth by itself is no defence. Yet none of the exposures in the press have succeeded in inviting a single serious libel case.

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On the other hand, the law is incredibly lax in matters of fund collection. There is no accountability worth the name.

Curiously, the framers of the Constitution completely overlooked S 124 of the Government of India Act, 1919 which defined certain acts on the part of 'any person holding office' under the Crown to be misdemeanours. One of them was 'oppression' by the Minister or Civil Servant 'in the exercise of his authority'. (This would have taken care of Mrs Gandhi's fraudulent proclamation of emergency. Another was 'wilful breach of the trust and duty of his office'. This provision could have been incorporated in our Constitution with suitable adaptation.

It is not too late in the day to do so. But, to begin with, the sanction provisions in the Criminal Procedure Code as well as the Prevention of Corruption Act must go. The citizen should have unimpeded access to the Courts of Law for complaints against holders of public office. The law is not powerless to deal with frivolous complaints and malicious complainants.

What the *proven* record reveals, from Reports of Commissions of Inquiry, is only the proverbial tip of the iceberg. It is hideous and terrifying enough. The malaise is far too deep to be tackled by existing laws. They need to be tightened up. Yet, it is only realistic to admit that the law alone is no deterrent. Public consciousness matters.

Forty years ago the Calcutta High Court delivered a judgement of great importance couched in excellent prose. The Court criticised the Chief Minister of Bengal, AK Fazlul Huq's misconduct in interfering in the trial of a criminal case by a District Magistrate. Chief Justice Derbyshire delivered this majestic censure:

"If the legitimate and proper transport of food can be interfered with and the malefactors protected by the Chief Minister of the province when they are brought before the Courts of law, there is an end of law and order in the province.

"The result is that instead of the orderly distribution of food there is a scramble for it in which the weakest suffer. Mr Fazlul Huq was Minister for the Home Department at the time this rice looting took place. The looted rice was intended for the Berhampore jail. The administration of jails is a matter with which the Home Department is charged. But neither the solemn oath nor public responsibility prevented him from doing this nefarious work.

Do we really loathe public misconduct? Experience suggests 'no'.

Mrs Gandhi: fraudulent Emergency.

"A person who takes an oath or makes an affirmation to tell the truth in a judicial proceeding and breaks it is guilty of perjury and may be punished at law by the Courts. A person, however, who on taking up an office is required by law to take an oath of office that he will faithfully perform the duties of that office takes what is called a promissory oath. The breach of a promissory oath, in the absence of a special provision of law to that effect, is not punishable at law. As far as I am aware there is no punishment in law for the breaking of the promissory oath taken by Mr Fazlul Huq when he assumed office as Chief Minister.

"But the clear violation of it brands a man as unfit for public office. If solemn promissory oaths by persons who take high office in the State are to be disregarded as mere formalities, there is no possibility of good government. Mr Huq is left to the contemplation and judgement of his fellowmen."

These damning words apply with greater force to the delinquents we have known in recent years.

But 'the contemplation' of the Indian citizen is the decisive factor. The question, therefore, brooks no evasion—do we really loathe public misconduct? ◆

Morarji: Vaidialingam recommended a probe against him.

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THE INDIAN CONNECTION

Within the last two years, India has become the new centre of international drug smuggling.

By Shirin Mehta

AJIT MOHAN BALSE WAS arrested on May 21, 1983, at Frankfurt airport. Interpol officials had been tipped off that he was carrying two kilograms of heroin in his luggage. He protested; the suitcases were searched and he was placed under arrest.

The story caused a minor sensation. Balse, former Indian Air Force pilot was one of the many unlikely heroin traffickers apprehended recently. Settled in the USA for 15 years (he had married an American) Balse had turned to drug 'peddling'. On March 31, Mr Hill of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) USA, posing as a 'mafia agent', along with another American accomplice, approached him for the real stuff—heroin.

A deal was carefully worked out. In order to prove his honesty Balse was to first smuggle out two kgs of the white sugar from India to the USA. Hill paid him an advance of $50,000 against expenses. A close check was kept on Balse during his stay in Bombay; he was allowed to leave India unmolested and then arrested at Frankfurt.

Shirin Mehta is Assistant Editor of **Imprint**
Her last article was Best Sellers And The Dirty Business Of Double-Dealing.

MAP BY BHATLEKAR

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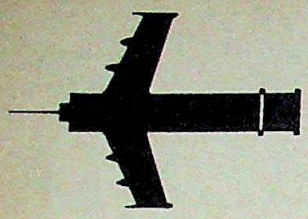
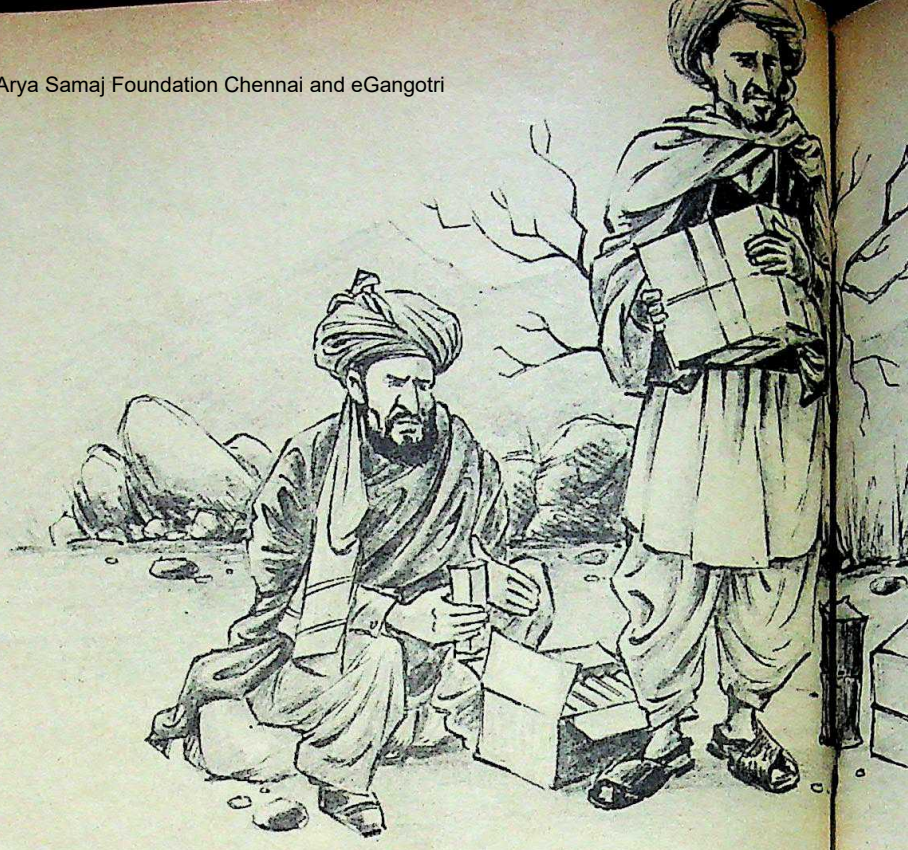


TEN YEARS AGO the Golden Triangle was the place for underground drug activity. Today, India is increasingly caught up in it.



The case was dramatic and it was noticed. But Balse is just one of the hundreds of Indians and international drug peddlers who are caught in the whole sordid underground.

May 28: the Narcotics Branch of the CBI raided a posh hotel in Colaba and recovered 20 kgs of heroin valued at Rs two crores ($US two million). April 16: charas worth Rs six lakhs was recovered from a couple at Yusuf Manzil, Mr Munir Sayyed Pathan and Mrs Mumtaz Pathan. April 8: customs officials arrested a 25-year-old Indian carrying 40 kgs of heroin valued at $3.3 million. Attempts had been made to cover up the odour with strong-smelling seeds. April 4: 1.8 kgs of heroin were seized at Kennedy airport from an Air India employee, Manhar Barot, who arrived from Bombay with a false-bottom attaché case. March 3: three Sudanese nationals were caught at Sahar smuggling out 2.3 kgs of charas.

Says SS Sekhon, Assistant Collector of Customs (Preventive), "It is true that opium smuggling (that is, opium in the raw form) is not on the increase. But its derivatives like heroin and crude heroin are increasingly favoured by the west. It is also true that to a great extent the Golden Crescent countries—Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran—have taken over."

THE WORDS ARE OMINOUS for they mark a change in the pattern of international heroin smuggling. And India is increasingly getting caught up in the activity. Over the last five years, it has become one of the biggest bases for the smuggling of illicit drugs. Formerly the Golden Triangle—Thailand, Burma and Laos—was the main centre for illicit drug activity. Today it is the Golden Crescent and because of its proximity to Pakistan—India.

Consider the facts. Ten years ago the Golden Triangle was *the* place for all underground drug activity. The export of narcotics to the west was conducted through there. Some time ago the countries were cracked down upon in the biggest round-up of smugglers and the network was closed down.

The international smugglers behind the activity simply shifted base. They moved further west and made in Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan the centres that they had built up in the Golden Triangle. The Golden Crescent countries (as they came to be called) all had the advantage of politically unsound backgrounds, lax rules and no real supervision. Illegal cultivation flourished. And the export of the narcotic was a breeze—no regulated intelligence or police control existed.

But in the late '70s all this changed. The Russian invasion of Afghanistan put an abrupt end to all clandestine exports and smuggling. The crop was still grown in abundance but an outlet was needed.

Couriers from Afghanistan would carry the raw opium into Pakistan where it would be refined and exported. The system worked well for some years till Interpol started clamping down on Pakistan. The refineries are hard to detect and close down. But the smuggling at ports and airports was practically brought to a standstill. Carrying drugs out from Pakistan became a high-risk venture.

In keeping with the abrupt switches of location, international smuggling shifted to India. India has well-regulated opium cultivation—with very little illegal growth. In fact till narcotics smuggling shifted to the country it had a very high rating with Interpol and other international agencies, and was practically above suspicion.

This made it easier for the carriers. Heroin could be brought over the Indo-Pak border with little difficulty. Getting it from there to outlets like Bombay and Delhi was easy. And here, above the suspicions of Interpol and our CBI, they could work unchecked.

Afghan refugees played a great role in this courier service. And Pakistanis were always ready to peddle the drug. Swiftly, almost silently, India became the new base and as more locals got wind of it they were inducted into the activity.

The amounts trickling over the border have steadily increased. In 1977 when the opium network first

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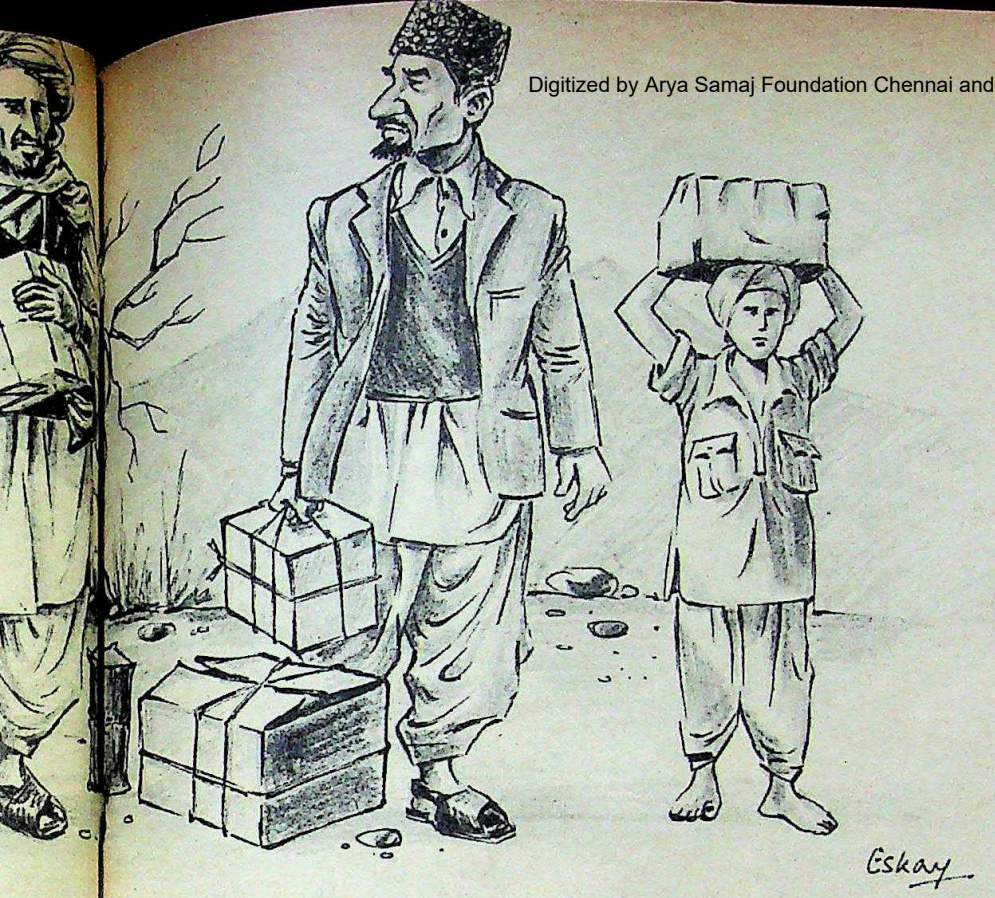

AS THE AMOUNTS trickling over the border steadily increased, Afghan refugees began to play a major role in this courier service.

developed a mere 11 kgs were seized. By 1980 nearly 460 kgs (worth Rs 552 lakhs) had entered India. And the amounts keep increasing. The recent flurry of hauls was not due to increased vigilance by the police and customs officials. By their own estimates trafficking has increased so much that they are managing to get more spectacular results simply because there are so many more carriers.

ALL THIS POINTS SOLIDLY to one fact. No matter what the country of origin, or the base from which it is exported, there is an international 'mafia' that organises and abets the trade. The careful operations, the long list of carriers employed to ensure secrecy—are all part of a highly-trained smuggling activity.

Often peddlers have been caught with quantities of heroin upto 42 kgs in their suitcase with no way of dumping it on the market. When questioned they can only reveal that they were going to be 'met' and the stuff taken from them. The mysterious contacts are never caught—the big-timers are practically unknown.

But for all in the business, from the highest to the lowest down, the common tie is money. The risks may be great but the profits are fatter. Very often couriers are paid so handsomely—and assured of all help if they are caught—that it's not worth their while to talk to the police.

The crime is often seen on a petty scale with police officials refusing to divulge the magnitude of the amounts carried back and forth. For the police the problem is only the number of addicts that exist in the country. Mr MD Gupte, Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), says with total confidence: "Tell me how many people in India can be involved in drug addiction? Very few. A minuscule per cent of the population. It is really not such a serious problem at all."

The customs officials are however caught in at the deep end. All the illegal activity of smuggling and export falls within their jurisdiction and they see the problem as being much bigger. The consignments are not easy to nab, there is often no way to pin a case on the smugglers and the king-pins continue to operate undisturbed.

The facts are clear. In 1980, 470 kgs of heroin were seized on the Indo-Pak border. By 1981 the figure had shot up to 1.5 metric tonnes. In addition, 582 cases involving about four tonnes of opium were detected in India. And as the international trafficking continues, India pays the price in terms of couriers as well as addicts.

The reasons are apparent for all to see. The profit margins jump by at least ten times at every stage. Ten kgs of raw opium, bought from a cultivator in UP or Kashmir, for Rs 5000 produces at least one kg of heroin with the wholesale price of three lakhs after a simple laboratory process. In Bandra or any other part of Bombay, this one kg of pure heroin would be worth Rs 25 lakhs. If the pure heroin finds its way successfully out of the country to the United States or Europe, it can fetch anything upto 30 times its price. Mr Sekhon claims: "The profits are enormous but if the person is caught in India the court takes a very lenient view for the price out here is only a few thousand rupees."

But how can so much heroin be shipped out of India and escape detection? For a start the methods are ingenious. An exporting firm in Cochin was caught canning heroin along with shrimps; an eight-kg heroin consignment was nabbed just as the last nails to a mango crate (meant for export) were being hammered in; Toshiba Anand battery cells were cunningly packed with the drug (later the firm disclaimed all responsibility); heroin is sometimes packed into tyres or concealed along with machinery spare parts.

"The main problem that the smugglers face is the smell of the drug," says Sekhon. "Heroin (even the low concentrate called brown sugar) has a very distinctive odour. By packing it into crates or machinery they hope to escape detection. Naturally this makes it even more difficult for us."

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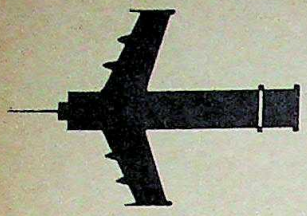

FOR ALL IN THE business the common tie is money. The risks may be great but the profits are fatter.

WHAT IS BEING DONE about this? Are the police officials in any way managing to control the flow?

MD Gupte, ACP, is optimistic, "We can safely say that we have managed to curb a large percentage of all the illegal activity." But the police are only concerned with the local problem unlike the American DEA which is a multi-purpose organisation.

The whole existing system is geared towards a delay. Until recently the CBI had a narcotics branch which has been discontinued. The CBI and Customs partition the work between them: the CBI is authorised to grab hauls of narcotics wherever they are found and make arrests; Customs can make a capture only if the narcotic is found 'in preparation for export' or else at the airport. If Customs suspects anyone of having opium they have to contact the CBI who in turn raid the place.

In addition, there are no elaborate detection systems at our airports nor any special gadgets or trained dog-sniffers. Mr PK Kapoor, Collector of Customs (Preventive) says: "There are a few dogs being trained in Delhi to detect the stuff. But it will take almost a year before they can be brought out."

Most of the people caught are therefore through spot-checks, 'keen observation' and international assistance. In fact most of the intelligence work is done by Interpol—only when Indians are arrested in the USA and Europe is the assistance of the CBI taken, to dig into their backgrounds and corroborate their evidence.

If the person is caught he can be tried under any of two procedures—the Customs Act of 1962 and COFEPOSA (Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act). Under the Customs Act the sentence can be stretched to three years. Under COFEPOSA the detained victim's case is heard by a panel and if found guilty he can be locked up. The case has to come up for a re-trial within a month—this time with a bench of retired judges acting as the panel.

"In the West," says Mr Sekhon, "even first-time offenders are given stiff fines and long sentences. The case here is always much weaker because the costs here are lower and it's not such a big-time offence."

Till the attitude that 'it's not such a big crime' continues and the CBI and Customs are divided in duties and responsibilities there can be no visible improvement in the situation. A lot more groundwork, breaking in on the refineries and other such activities are called for before opium smuggling can be contained—effectively—in this country.

THE FUTURE OF THE BUSINESS is uncertain. While the normal estimates envisage a higher and higher percentage of drug trafficking involvement, Mr Sekhon claims that the Punjab agitation may well put an end to it. Today the route taken by the couriers who come in from Pakistan is necessarily through Punjab. If the situation worsens it might not be worth their while to continue bringing the drug in.

What, however, is bound to happen is that local producers will enter the market. The strict narcotics enforcement can be easily cracked if cultivators took to growing illegal patches. "The plant's leaves are very similar to other plants," Mr Sekhon admits. "There is practically no way of knowing if illegal opium fields are kept. One has to be always alert, patrolling the area closely and even then an official can mistake it for something else. Clearly this sort of vigilance is not possible for a whole district."

The figures bear this out. The Government offers better pricing to cultivators who show a better yield. The current base price is Rs 130 per kg and if the yield is more than Rs 60 per hectare the cultivator gets Rs 300 per kg for additional growth. However this cannot compare with the smuggler's flat rate of Rs 600 per kg and it is in the cultivators' interest to grow at least *some* opium illegally.

But the more logical extensions show us going the way of all grower countries. A recent item in the papers

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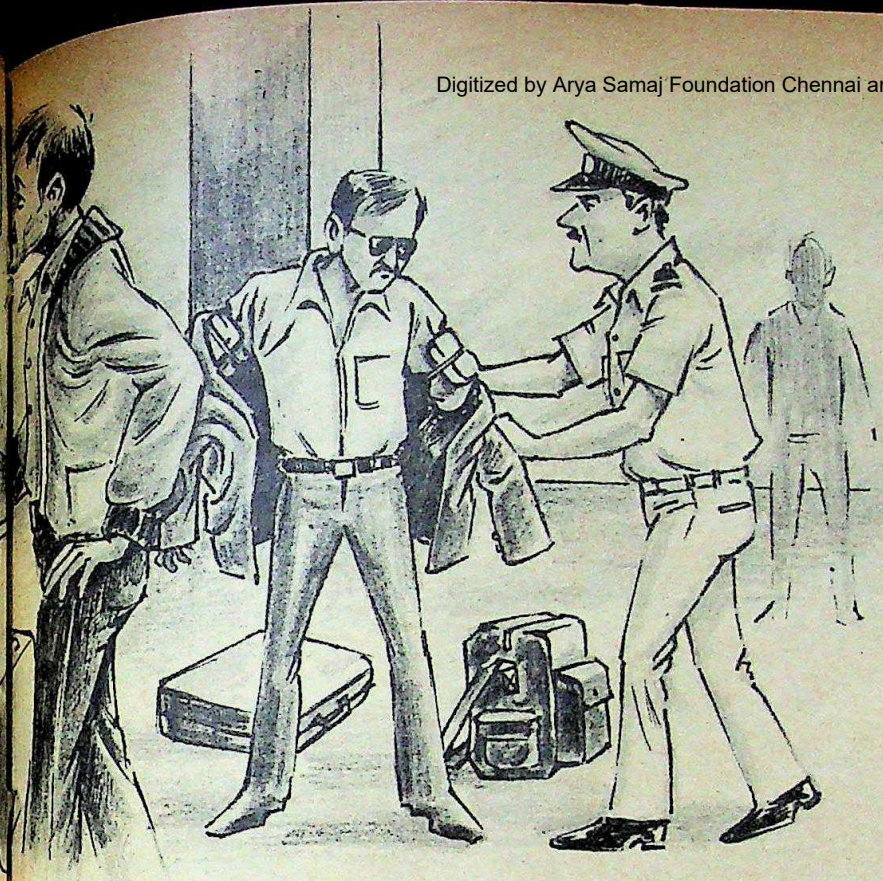

THE CUSTOMS officials are caught in at the deep end for all the illegal smuggling and export falls within their jurisdiction.

expressed horror that Pakistani youths are taking to heroin as more and more of it floods the streets from Afghanistan. Afghanistan's crop of 300 tonnes is enough to feed every heroin addict worldwide for a year. And as it is being dumped into Pakistani streets the level of addiction has shot up. Now heroin addiction in Pakistan affects 50,000 people; two years ago there was virtually none.

This example is not a stray case. Addiction shot up in Afghanistan when the Russians initially clamped down on all export activity and the drug was going a-begging. Today, addiction in Afghanistan is a well-known problem.

And in India too the situation is not far away. As more and more refineries try and make pure heroin for western consumption, a low grade derivative—brown sugar—is finding its way on to the Indian streets at incredibly low prices. Prices of brown sugar a year ago were Rs 120 per gram. Today a gram costs Rs 80 in Bombay's suburbs of Bandra and can be got in central Bombay's Sukhlaji Street for Rs 40. Brown sugar has practically flooded Bombay's Bandra and Colaba markets. And since it is going cheap more and more students are tempted to try it.

It is impossible to realistically estimate the number of addicts even in a city like Bombay. Police estimates claim a figure of 10,000 for the city; people closer to the scene say 50,000. "For every person who sits in a joint and smokes," claims Uday, a former addict himself, "There must be at least three who just buy their weekly quota and disappear. There are many more people who buy it and smoke or chase in seclusion than there are visible addicts."

Whatever the figure it is bound to increase. With the recent surge of brown sugar sales and the lower costs of all hard drugs it may reach an all-time high in a few years. Or then again it may not. It seems to be a matter of chance.

A DOMESTIC ADDICTION problem is just one social effect. There is also the problem of would-be criminals in the middle classes.

Take the case of Pakistan. Till the heroin explosion hit that country in the mid-'70s, smuggling was not a middle class phenomenon. But soon heroin smugglers and middle class youths discovered a mutuality of interests.

The smugglers needed couriers. More specifically, they needed couriers who seemed like globe-trotters, whose frequent travels would not seem unusual.

The middle classes were attracted by the easy money. The profits were phenomenal and the risks were relatively low: a cannister of heroin, packed in an old shoe; an empty jar of talcum powder refilled with a deadlier white stuffing; the odd polythene bag of narcotics squeezed into a hollowed-out hard cover book—the methods were easy to come by. And unless, customs had been tipped off, they were unlikely to examine the personal effects of a seemingly harmless passenger.

By the time, Interpol got wise to what was going on, it was too late. Some of Pakistan's brighter young men had turned to smuggling. Now, international customs authorities are being careful. Any male aged between 25-40 with a surname like Khan is almost certain to be thoroughly searched at Heathrow or Kennedy.

The arrests of men like Balse have led authorities to treat Indians with the same suspicion. And because Indian police don't waste their time with smugglers, several entrepreneurs are being attracted to the profession. Although the customs claims that drug export has decreased since last year, the arrest of Indian couriers is becoming increasingly frequent in the West. A sure indication that drug smuggling is not on the decline.

The mafia may move on once India becomes too hot for it. But a sad legacy of the heroin boom may be its social cost—both in terms of addicts and smugglers. ◆

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DEFINING OFFICIAL SECRETS

The Official Secrets Act needs to be overhauled.

In August, **Imprint** printed the secret correspondence between the former President, N Sanjiva Reddy and the former Prime Minister, Morarji Desai. During the furore that followed the publication, Home Minister, PC Sethi told the Rajya Sabha, "The leakage of the letters, from whatever sources, may be a breach of the Official Secrets Act and the contravention of traditions which are normally followed in a parliamentary system."

The Official Secrets Act currently in operation was passed on April 2, 1923, and is therefore, considerably out of date. It has been repeatedly violated by investigative journalists and there is little doubt that it needs to be overhauled.

Some sections of the Act are fairly uncontroversial—Section three lays down penalties for spying. It provides that 'if any person for any purposes prejudicial to the safety or interests of the State approaches, inspects, passes over or is in the vicinity of, or enters, any prohibited place; or makes any sketch, plan, model or note which is circulated to be or might be or is intended to be directly or indirectly useful to an enemy' and then 'collects, records, publishes or communicates to any other person any secret official code or password or any sketch, plan, model, article or note or other document which might be useful to the enemy, then he can be prosecuted and imprisoned if found guilty'.

Section four concerns communication with foreign agents. It says that for the purposes of a prosecution under Section three, the fact that a person has been in touch with a foreign agent will be relevant for proving that he was acting in a manner prejudicial to the interests of the State. There have been prosecutions under these sections before and they have been, largely non-controversial.

The most controversial Section of the Act is Section five, which gives wide discretion to officials in the classification of documents and behind which the government functionaries often seek protection even over matters which must come up for discussion before the public at large.

According to this section, it is not necessary for a person to act on behalf of a foreign power to contravene the Act. If he is in possession of, or publishes a 'classified document', that is enough for him to be guilty.

Ministers and civil servants are expressly forbidden from revealing information that they have had access to due to their official positions. Ministers swear an Oath of Secrecy which runs: "I will not directly or indirectly communicate or reveal to any person or persons any matter which shall be brought under my consideration. . . ." Civil servants are even more restricted. Section 11 of the Central Civil Service (Conduct Rules) 1964 says: "No Government servant shall. . . . communicate directly or indirectly, any official document or any part thereof or information to any government servant or any other person to whom he is not authorised to communicate such document or information. . . ."

It is also relatively easy for officials to have documents declared 'secret'. According to the Manual of Office Procedures, even the notes made on a file by a civil servant are 'confidential' and cannot be referred to any authority outside the Secretariat. The government is further protected by Section 123 of the Indian Evidence Act of 1872 which says, "no one shall be permitted to give any evidence derived from unpublished official records relating to any affairs of State. . . ."

In effect, the Official Secrets Act has not greatly handicapped the judiciary. During the case of the State of Uttar Pradesh versus Raj Narain (1975) in the Supreme Court, the Court agreed that those documents pertaining to the protection of the Prime Minister when she was on tour were not really official secrets.

The Act has however, handicapped the Indian press. It is felt by sections of the press that the Act is used more to protect government officials from exposures of their inefficiency than to protect official

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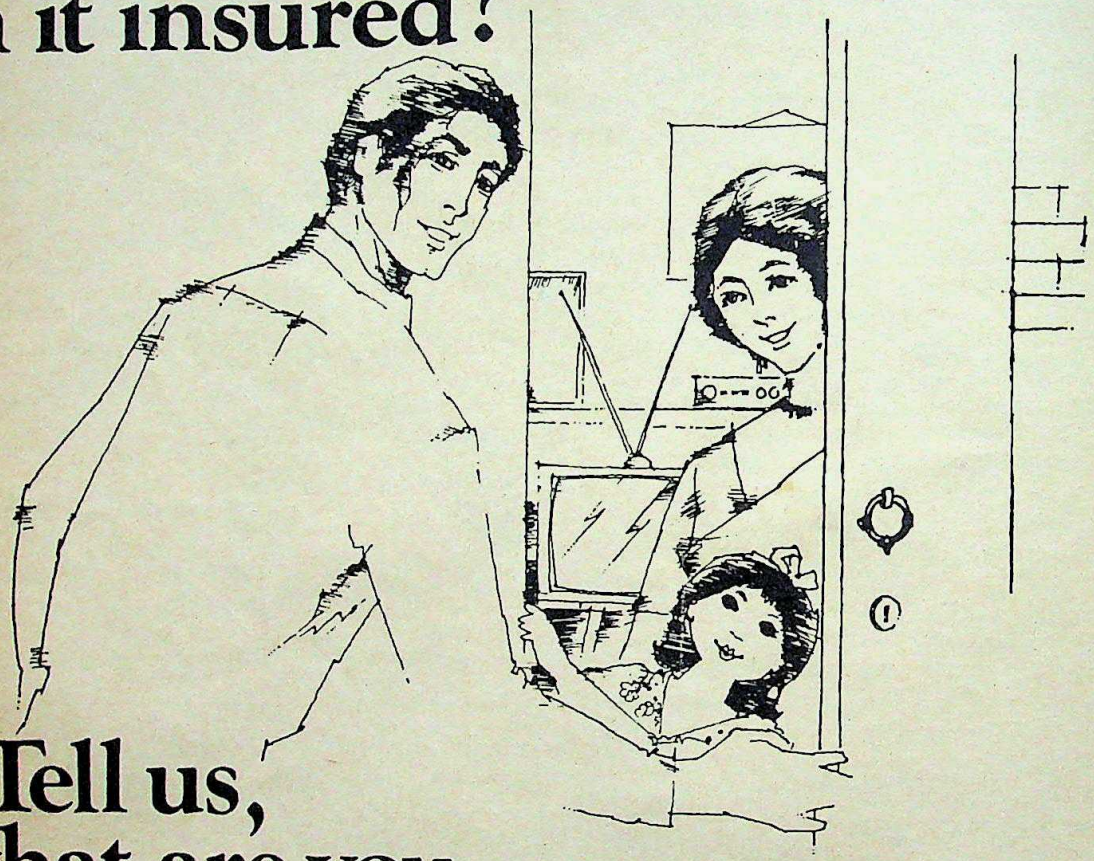

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secrets. The case of changing the provisions of the Act relating to communication of official documents rests on two grounds: (1) The State has now such wide powers and functions as to affect the entire gamut of a citizen's life and liberty that it is essential that its actions are subject to public debate and examination. (2) The colonial regime which framed the Act was neither responsive nor responsible to the people and for a democratic government to defend an Act that was passed in 1923, is absurd.

When the present Congress (I) government came to power, it said it was considering amending the Act. But on August 9, the Law Minister told the Lok Sabha that the Government 'has dropped the proposal to amend the Offical Secrets Act'.

It is not difficult to see why Mrs Gandhi's government has no desire to change the present state of affairs. The reports of enquiry commissions and committees are routinely marked 'secret' and hidden away. The Bihar government has been using 'secrecy' clauses to conceal CID reports on the Bhagalpur blindings. In 1981, Mrs Gandhi's government switched the consultancy contracts for the Thal Vaishet and Hazira fertilizer plants from a reputable US firm to a gaggle of European companies. When files, revealing this were leaked, the government invoked the Official Secrets Act.

Is there an alternative? One view was expressed by a leader-writer in the *Tribune* (Chandigarh): "The Press Council has proposed an amendment to Section five of the Official Secrets providing for safeguards to the Press while revealing classified information in the public interest. It has also suggested that no person or newspaper should be prosecuted without the sanction of a committee which includes the Attorney General of India and representatives from the Press Council and the Bar Council."

Similar views have been voiced by Justice AN Grover, the government-appointed Chairman of the Press Council. He told a seminar in Faridabad on August 20 that the Press Council had recommended drastic amendments in Section five of the Act which, he said, served more as an 'inhibitive damper than as a punitive machinery in actual practice'. He quoted approvingly Hugh Thomas' statement that 'if every occasion when the British Official Secrets Act is breached were to become the subject of proceedings in the Courts, a tenth of the working population might find themselves in jail'.

It seems unlikely that any prosecutions under the Official Secrets Act will be launched against **Imprint** and Arun Gandhi for printing the Morarji-Sanjiva correspondence. Apart from the fact that legal experts feel that the Courts would rule that the Act did not apply in such cases, this government has little to lose from any embarassment caused to the former Janata ministers. And clearly, questions of national security are not involved.

But what if the correspondence had concerned Sanjiva and Mrs Gandhi and the allegations had been against Sanjay not Kanti? Would the government then have invoked the provisions of the Official Secrets Act? The question is hypothetical but the fact that it has been repeatedly raised suggests that Section five of the Act needs to be overhauled. ♦

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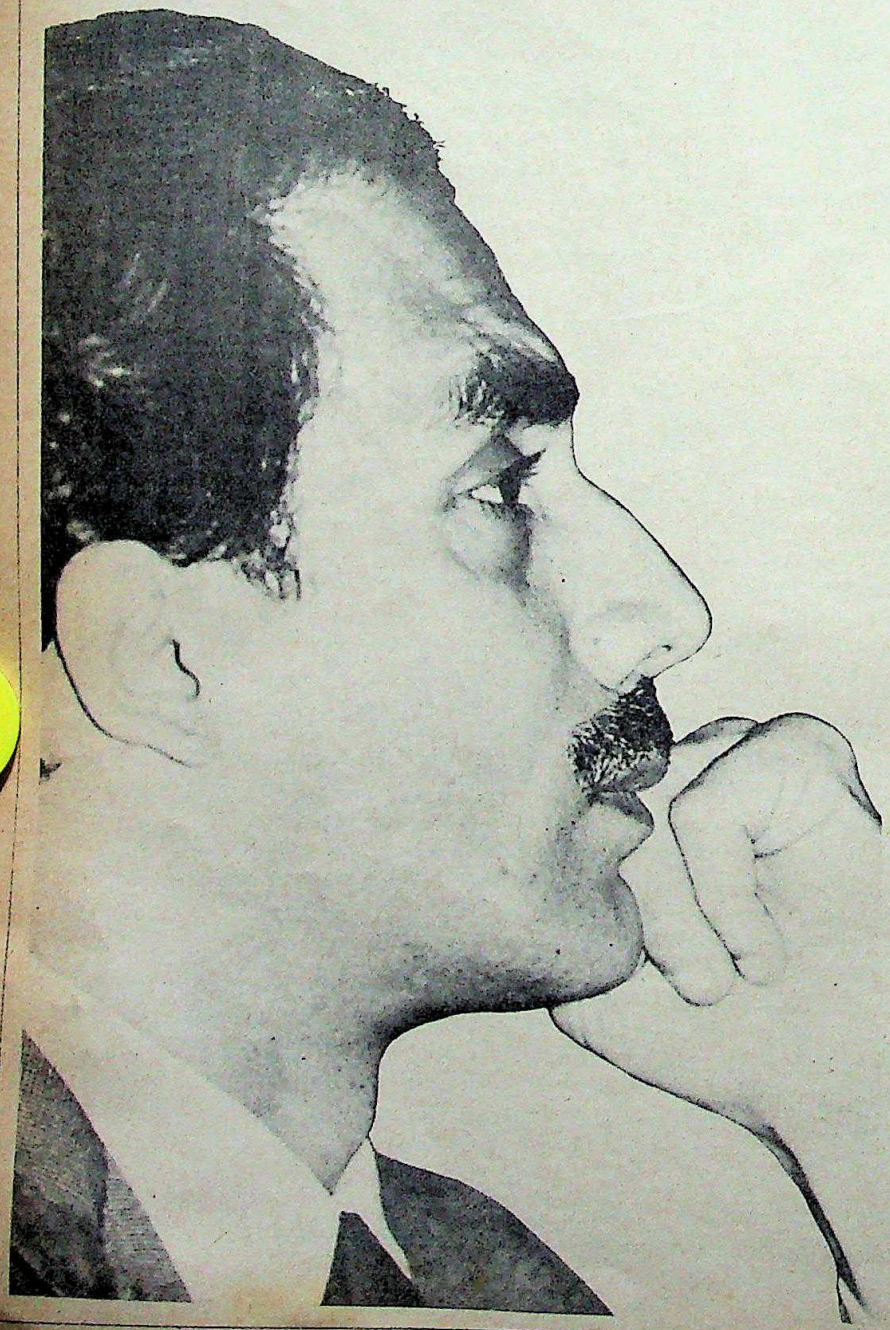
Clashes In T

India's premier civil liberties organisation, the People's Union for Civil Liberties, is torn by internal strife.



AN EFFECTIVE CIVIL LIBerties organisation is essential to any democratic society. In India, where overzealous bureaucrats and authoritarian regimes routinely trample over the civil liberties of citizens, many of whom are poor and illiterate, a civil liberties organisation has a particularly significant role to play. And yet the People's Union For Civil Liberties (PUCL), a strong, dynamic organisation made up of such luminaries as HM Seervai, Nani Palkhivala, Justice Tarkunde and Arun Shourie, has been adversely affected by internal strife. One of its Vice-Presidents, Durga Bhagwat, has resigned; Cho Ramaswamy, a noted member has walked out in anger and Claude Alvares, the noted Goan writer has attacked its President in print.

In part, the problems of the PUCL are the problems of an army in peacetime. The organisation was formed in 1976 (as the People's Union For Civil Liberties and Democratic Rights) out of Jayaprakash Narayan's 'Citizens For Democracy'. It was the period of the Emergency and the issue was clear : liberty versus tyranny. In 1980, after Mrs Gandhi's triumphant return to power, the PUCL emerged in its present avatar, as a broad-based membership organisation with an enthusiastic cadre of young volunteers. By September 1981, PUCL units had been opened in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and West Bengal. Today, the organisation has 6,000 members scattered all over the country.

Whenever the issues have been straightforward civil liberties matters

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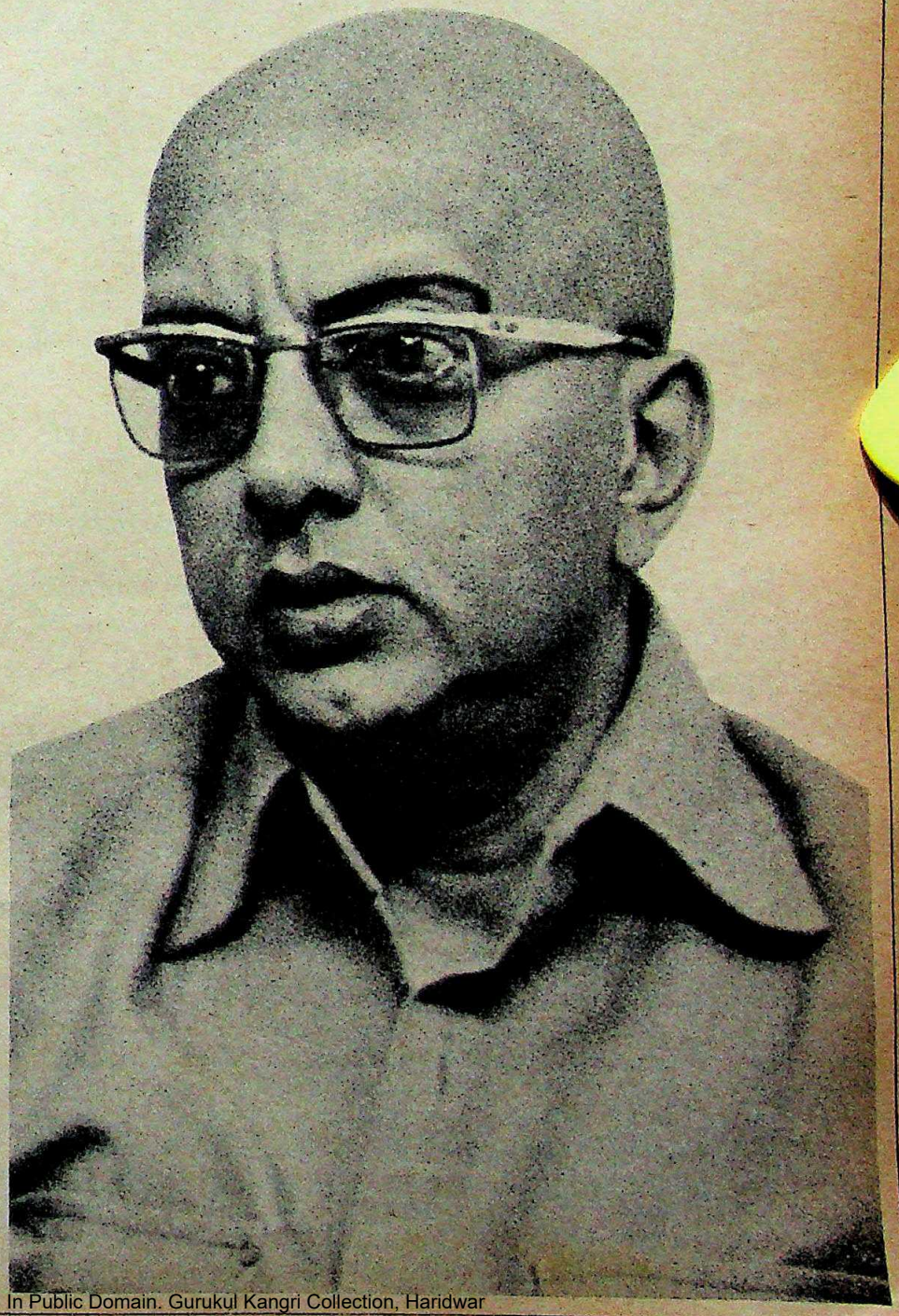
The PUCL

By Amrita Shah

on which there exists a consensus, the PUCL has done laudable work. A committee under Justice Tarkunde, its President, exposed the systematic killings of dacoits by the police under the guise of 'encounters' and another committee under Justice Krishna Iyer compiled a new Prison Act and jail manual to improve conditions in India's jails. Investigations into police atrocities in Agra, the unlawful detention of people without trial and the repression of landless labourers in Bihar also earned the PUCL an impressive reputation. Its stand against the National Security Act and various other measures designed to re-introduce the spirit of the Emergency also pleased its diverse membership.

PUCL's troubles began when it tried to cope with issues that were less clear-cut, those on which no consensus had evolved. As long as the organisation concentrated on its old theme of liberty versus tyranny, it flourished, but in the absence of an Emergency, when it turned its attention to slightly more peripheral issues, the dissensions emerged. Like many armies, it has had trouble fighting the peace.



FROM THE EARLY DAYS OF the PUCL, there had been some disagreement over the organisation's attitude towards Naxalites. Was it right to extend the protection of the laws of a free society to those who, if they triumphed, would dismantle that free society? And should an essentially peaceful organisation be involving itself with those who advocated the use of violence? It was, it seems, decided that

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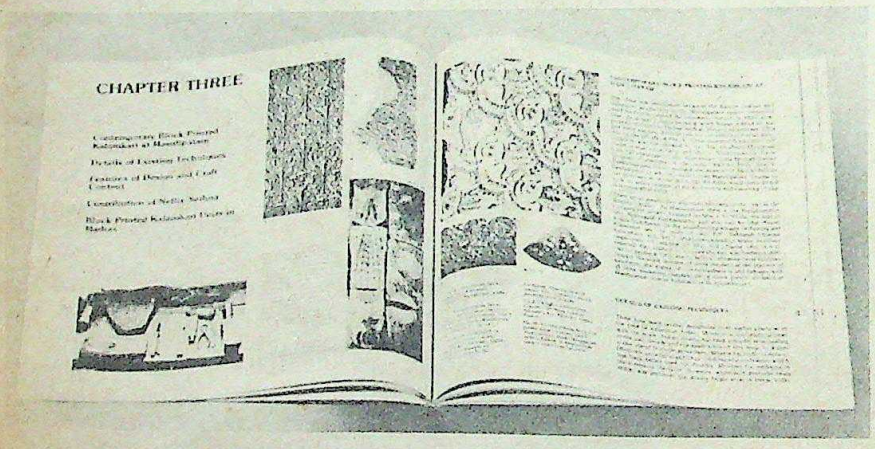

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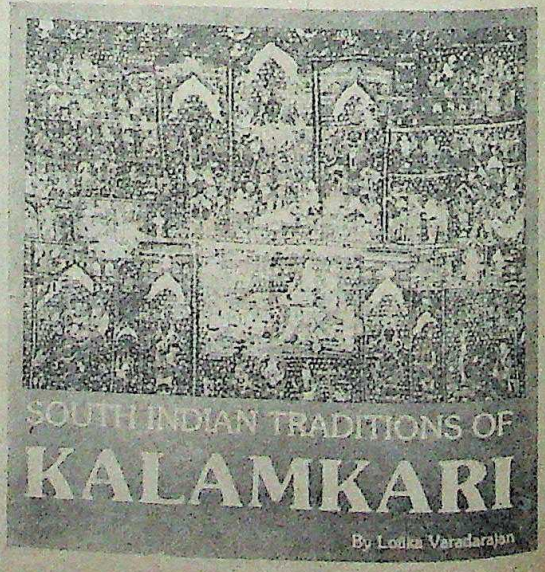

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the fight for liberty could not be a sectarian one, that anyone who lived in India was entitled to the protection of its laws. (There are precedents for this: the American Civil Liberties Union had defended Nazis, whose views it loathes, on precisely these grounds.)

In 1982, the issue was raised again by Cho Ramaswamy, the fiery, high-profile Tamil writer who was then President of the Tamil Nadu unit of PUCL. Ramaswamy felt that in Tamil Nadu at least, the PUCL had a reputation for being in sympathy with the Naxalites. At the National Conference of the PUCL in Madras in March 1982, he argued that only by condemning violence would the PUCL gain in credibility and tried to pass a resolution to this effect.

The resolution met with stiff opposition. Some members argued that the advocacy of violence by individuals or groups might well be undesirable but it was not a civil liberties issue and therefore, not really the concern of the Conference. "No," said Cho. "Any act which would paralyse a citizen from exercising his fundamental rights *is* a civil liberties issue and should concern the PUCL." Many members did not dispute this but insisted that as the PUCL had never advocated violence, it need not condemn it. A disillusioned Ramaswamy said, "The PUCL's persistent, systematic and mobilised refusal to condemn violence has shocked me." And with that, he resigned from the PUCL.

Six months after the storm, PUCL office bearers stick to their original stand. Says Navroz Seervai, Joint Secretary of the Bombay Unit: "It was pointed out to him (Ramaswamy) that the PUCL constitution itself states that it will fight for civil liberties by non-violent and peaceful means. Why should we gratuitously go out of our way to condemn groups that use violence? Besides, we have no right to condemn someone without knowing the full facts." Like many other PUCL members, Seervai echoes Tarkunde's explanation that the Naxalite situation had to be seen in the socio-economic context.

All of which does not really answer Cho's basic question: if the PUCL was against violence, then why was it so unwilling to condemn it publicly? PUCL's explanations tend to centre around priorities. Says Seervai: "When weighing priorities, it was unanimously accepted that the main fight is to be waged in the public field opposing state action against individuals." The sentiment seemed to be that while nobody really approved of Naxalite terror, this was not the major issue. What was necessary was to band together, to fight state repression, not throw stones at other groups. There was also a feeling that Cho was out to antagonise the Marxists in the PUCL coalition and that this was, at least for the time being, neither advisable nor necessary.

It was the classic dilemma of an army in peacetime. Was it to spend its time preparing to fight the real enemy in the big battles that must inevitably, soon be fought? Or was it to turn on those within its general number who, while facing the same enemy, did not really fit in with the majority? Or as Cho might see it: expediency versus principle. The PUCL chose to remain a broad-based coalition and to sacrifice relatively irrelevant statements of principle.

PHOTOGRAPH BY AYESHA SONI

Darshana Bhogilal claims there is enough land in Bombay to house 12 lakh huts.

IN BOMBAY AT LEAST, Naxalites and violence were never really a major issue. PUCL hit the headlines only when it championed the cause of the pavement dwellers and took the case all the way to the Supreme Court. It was again a civil liberties issue but one which seemed peripheral to the central liberty verus tyranny axis. Inevitably, the organisation was criticised. One of its more celebrated members, Nani Palkhivala, seemed to disapprove of its stand in a newspaper interview and one of the Vice Presidents, Durga Bhagwat, resigned in protest.

In July 1981, during the monsoon,

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AR Antulay, the then Maharashtra Chief Minister resolved to clear Bombay's pavements of the thousands of people who had made them their homes. Because, in the past, such clearances had been foiled by the tendency of the pavement dwellers to return to their footpaths once government fervour had cooled, Antulay also resolved to send them all out of Bombay to unknown destinations.

Two journalists went to see Darshana Bhogilal, a lawyer who is an active member of PUCL and informed her of Antulay's scheme. Bhogilal spoke to MA Rane, General Secretary of PUCL, Bombay and others. They decided that the organisation would move the courts to halt the implementation of Antulay's scheme. After several hearings and a personal visit to the sites of the demolitons by Justice Lentin, the Bombay High Court issued an order halting the clearance work till after the monsoon.

Predictably,there was some controversy over PUCL's involvement in the matter as this was not widely perceived as a civil liberties issue. Because journalist Olga Tellis, whose left-wing sympathies are well-known, had also filed a petition against the demolitions, the PUCL stance began to be seen in left-right terms. There had been widespread feeling against the pavement dwellings among Bombay's middle class and now, PUCL was seen as supporting the poor against the rich.

The PUCL lawyers insist that this was not true. Explains Ashok Desai who handled the case in its early stages: "We did not say that hutment dwellers have a right to encroach upon and occupy footpaths." The PUCL argument in the Supreme Court was threefold. It claimed that by throwing them out of their homes, the government was depriving pavement dwellers of their right to life—by depriving them of their right to shelter and to employment, which was covered by this right. Further, the government appeared to be violating the Directive Principles. Article 41 directs the State to give assistance to people in want. But, said the PUCL lawyers, the government was actually depriving people in need, rather than helping them. And finally, argued the PUCL, the government was also trying to harass the slum dwellers so that they would leave without being deported.

The government had argued in its defence, that it had no land to provide alternative accommodation to those pavement dwellers it was deporting. PUCL activists set out to prove it wrong. Says Darshana Bhogilal: "We got a list signed by the Additional and the Deputy Commissioner of Encroachment that in the three *talukas* of Borivili, Andheri and Kurla alone there was enough vacant land for 12 lakh huts."

The PUCL case for the resettlement of pavement dwellers is a closely argued one that takes into account the views of several experts on urban planning and is based on some of the government's own statistics. The Bombay Municipal Corporation does not, of course, agree with PUCL's conclusions, but many of the organisation's critics were not even sure that PUCL had any business getting involved in the issue.

Was it really the job of a civil liberties organisation to try and propound solutions to Bombay's housing problem? And wasn't the PUCL using an almost Marxist characterisation of liberty to include freedom from economic deprivation among its activities?

One of the strengths of the PUCL in Bombay has always been that it has a strong body of middle class, non-Marxist support—it is perhaps the only organisation with this kind of support. And among the middle classes, the pavement dwellers issue was seen almost entirely in encroachment terms. There was a widespread feeling that unless checked, the slums would take over all of the city's pavements. Further, many middle class people regarded the slums as breeding grounds of crime, prostitution and bootlegging. To be sure, there was some sympathy for the plight of the evicted slum dwellers but this sympathy was allayed by the reasoning that it was 'either us or them'—either the slum dwellers had to go, or middle class people would find their neighbourhoods becoming unbearable.

Public perceptions of the PUCL as meddlers were heightened when Bombay's Municipal Commissioner PM Sukhthankar announced that the PUCL was obstructing him from performing his duty. The issue blew up into a full-fledged row when Durga Bhagwat, the noted Marathi writer, wrote Sukhthankar a letter congratulating him and resigned from the organisation.

Bhagwat's objections to the PUCL stemmed not so much from the belief that this was not a civil liberties issue as from the feeling that something had to be done about Bombay's slums. Lawyer Nani Palkhivala stopped short of criticising the PUCL but seemed to suggest in an interview that the legal action was ill-advised (drawing an angry rejoinder from PUCL activists) and Romesh Thapar attacked the organisation's stand in his column in the *Economic And Political Weekly*. He

Durga Bhagwat congratulated the Municipal Commissioner and quit.

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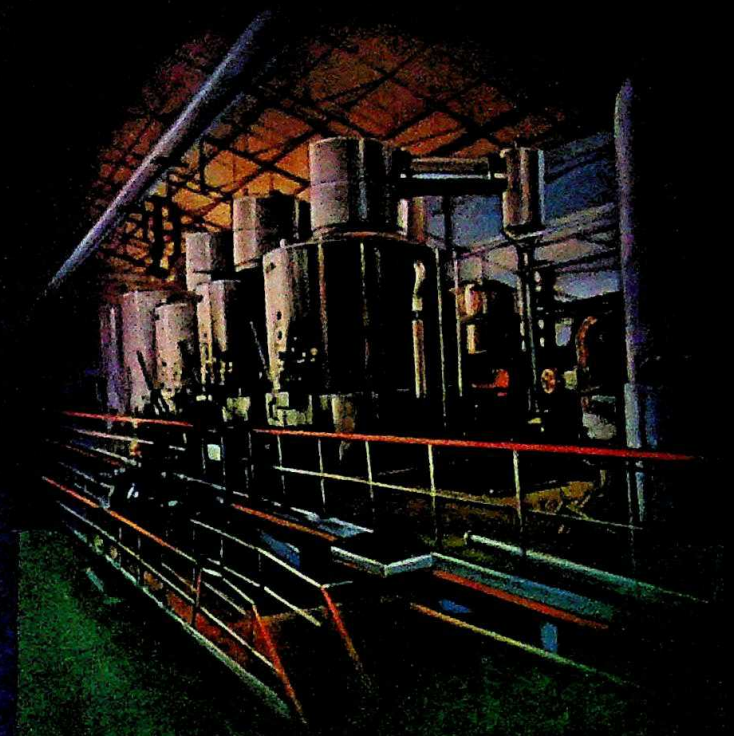
PHOTOGRAPH BY AYESHA SONI

Many industries depend on this symbol



Kirloskar

The Sugar Industry looks to this symbol for a totally reliable range of sugar centrifuge motors and controls, transformers and turbo alternators, pumps and valves, steam, air and gas compressors, welding equipment and diesel generating sets.

This Kirloskar logo colour scheme belongs to Kirloskar Brothers Ltd., Pune.

Kirloskar Quality & Reliability

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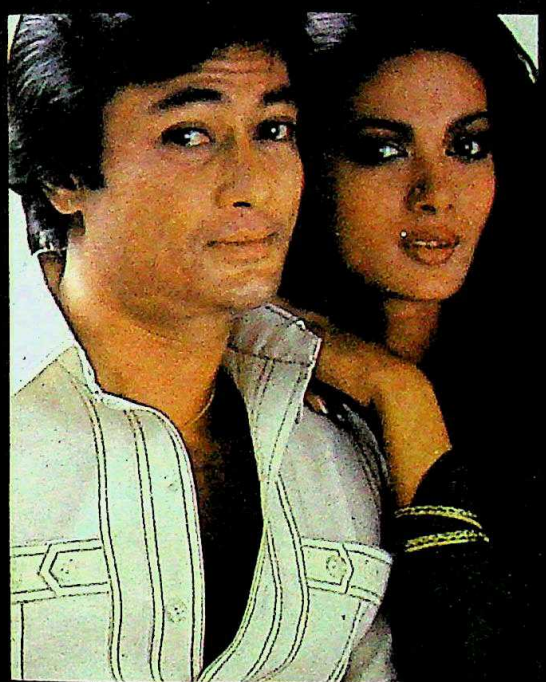

Live the legend in

BOMBAY DYEING

SUITINGS

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For certain people who expect a lot more from a fan than just a lot of a

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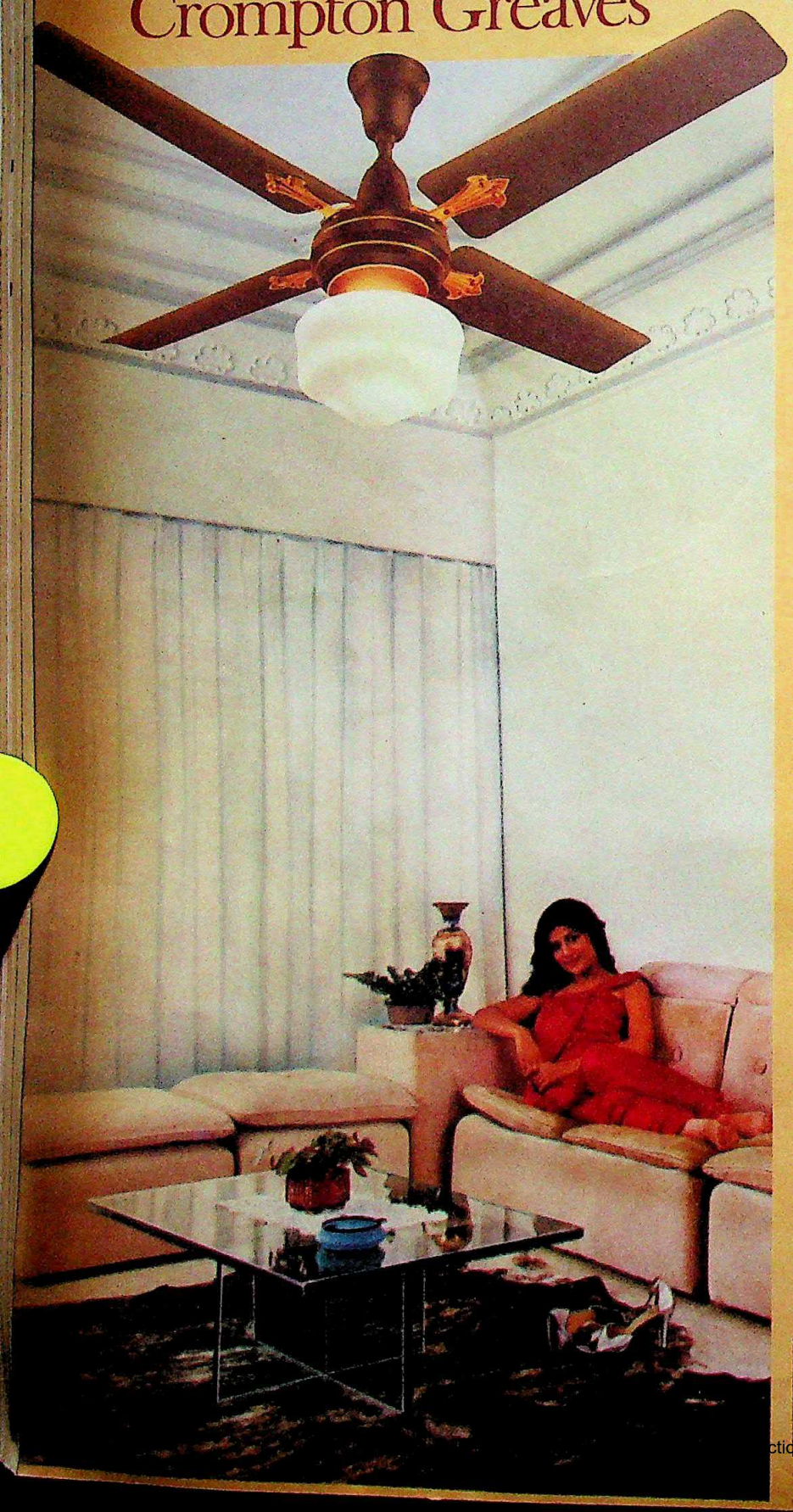
Wind Elegance by Crompton Greaves

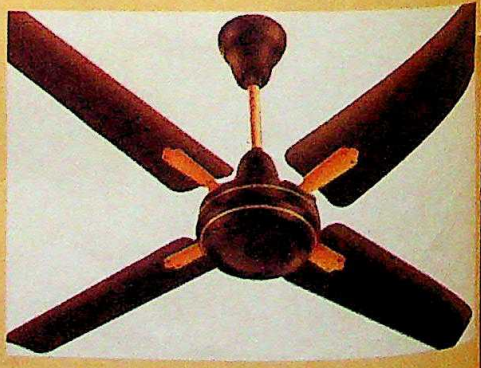


CHANDEL'AIR

It's a fan! It's a light! It's a fan that lights up your kind of living. A revolutionary concept, Chandel 'Air is a fan with special under-lighting. 4 blades with unique, decorative shanks. Choice of electronic or choke type regulator.

Heritage

A 'punkah' with a difference. Give a delightful ambience to a room. With ornamental brass fittings. And fancy pull-cord facility for on/off operation and for regulating speed. In a striking brown combination. With provision for incorporating under-light, if you want it.



Dec'Air

A piece of art. It's a masterpiece in performance as well as in looks. In an elegant copper brown finish. Has a classic, timeless appeal that never goes out of style. 4 blades with metallized brass-finish shanks. Choke type regulator.

Crompton Greaves

Built with care, built to last

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commended Bhagwat on her resignation and wrote: "Populist posturings in support of illegalities seem to have become the only code of conduct for such organisations seeking a short cut to political clout."

It was a major attack, but to this day, PUCL lawyers are convinced that they did the right thing and that the criticism was unjustified. The anti-PUCL backlash was a new feeling for them and made them realise that it is difficult to stand up for individual liberties when the interests of your supporters are involved.

But at least partly, the PUCL's Bombay unit must take the blame for the damage to its own image. It never presented its own case in persuasive terms and never seemed to realise that it had to try especially hard to convince people of the justice of a cause that did not involve opposing Emergency-style tyranny. That the public would not see this round of demolitions and Turkman Gate in the same terms does not seem to have occurred to them.

PART OF THE PUCL's PROBlems arise from the fact that people tend to blur the distinction between members as individuals with professions and private pursuits and their being representatives of a civil liberties group. They expect the former role to be determined by the latter. This reasoning is fine as far as it would imply that a person fighting for civil liberties should not be torturing prisoners, or repressing labourers for instance. But there are times when the issue becomes much more complex and indefinable.

The case of the Goa police officer is one such instance. PS Rane, the officer in question, was widely believed to have been involved in a number of mysterious deaths in the '70s besides supplying falsified evidence in a murder case. In February 1978, Rane, and a local tough assaulted and mauled a Swedish tourist, Par Kallen and his Goan wife.

Indignant protests and public meetings were held in the town of Margao against the officer. Prominent amongst the agitators was a Citizens' Committee for Civil Liberties and Human Rights.

Par Kallen filed a suit which finally reached the High Court. MA Rane, General Secretary of the PUCL, Bombay, (also PS Rane's cousin) undertook his legal defense. MA Rane asked VM Tarkunde, to appear before the Supreme Court on behalf of his cousin. There was no doubt about the guilt of the police officer, but Tarkunde argued that the sentence of imprisonment awarded to his client be set aside so that he would not lose his job.

Tarkunde argued that as a lawyer he had to defend people.

Claude Alvares, a journalist and a member of the National Council of the PUCL was angered by Tarkunde's acceptance of Rane's case. As the president of a civil liberties organisation, Tarkunde, according to Alvares, should not have defended a man who, in fact, had been the subject of protest by a civil liberties organisation.

Alvares felt that after fighting for police accountability and against police brutality, it was absurd that Tarkunde should defend a policeman known for such acts and actually argue to keep him in office.

Claude Alvares resigned from the National Council of the PUCL and wrote an article in the July 10, 1983 issue of the *Sunday Observer* titled, *Why I resigned from the PUCL's National Council*. Two weeks later, the paper printed Tarkunde's rejoinder.

Tarkunde argued that as a lawyer, it was his job to defend people, not to pick and choose those who he approved of personally. He also came up with two other defences. The first one was that he was ignorant of the background of the case when he accepted the brief. Had he known that the case had been built up by a civil liberties organisation, he said, then he would have refused the brief. This was a weak defence and not one that did him much credit.

But his second defence was more convincing: "Supposing Claude Alvares was right in his view that I should not have appeared for the police officer, it is not understandable why he should have resigned from the National Council of the PUCL. The police officer had obviously not approached the PUCL for his defence and it had nothing to do in defending him. Surely, Claude Alvares knows that I appeared in the Rane case in the capacity of an advocate and not as an office bearer of the PUCL."

Alvares is not convinced even by Tarkunde's second argument. "When Ram Jethmalani takes up the cases of Haji Mastaans, it is not liked by the younger people in the PUCL," he says. "This involves a fundamental moral crisis—the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing." Ideally, Alvares would like PUCL members to engage only in activities that are in keeping with its image—even when they are not doing PUCL work.

The dispute really is over what kind of organisation the PUCL should become. Should it remain a broad-based coalition to which various people offer their time and expertise on a part-time voluntary basis? Or should it become a more rigidly organised group composed of people who mould all their activities to a sort of 'PUCL lifestyle'? Again, this may seem like a minor issue. As long as PUCL's work gets done, as long as Tarkunde continues to expose 'encounters' and the like, does it really matter who his other clients are? But because the organisation is at a formative stage, when its members are still trying to work out exactly what it should evolve into, such matters will continue to be discussed.

INEVITABLY, SOME MEMBERS of the PUCL are also dissatisfied by the structure of the organisation. It is not clear how decisions are taken and who

PHOTOGRAPH BY F ROBINSON

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NANI PALKHIVALA:
ENDS CANNOT JUSTIFY MEANS

Nani Palkhivala, eminent advocate and Director of Tata Sons, has been an active and vocal member of the PUCL since its inception. He however did not agree with the stand taken by the PUCL on the pavement dwellers issue. He believed that the Municipal Corporation, an official, statutory body should not be prevented from carrying out its duties on grounds of, what he considers, misplaced humanitarianism. In an interview with the Sunday Observer *in October 1982 he denounced the PUCL stand evoking a strong reaction from members of the organisation. In an interview with* Imprint *Mr Palkhivala takes a similar stand.*

Q. Do you find there is a lack of understanding among lay people and the media over what constitutes a civil liberties issue?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you feel that all too often 'humanitarian issues' are confused with 'civil liberties'?

A. Humanitarian issues are quite different from civil liberties issues. In the name of humanitarianism, there are many cases these days of miscarriage of mercy. As far as public interest goes, miscarriage of mercy can be as dangerous to public welfare as miscarriage of justice.

Q. What do you think is the constitutional position of the Directive Principles vis-a-vis the Fundamental Rights? What in your opinion should be the ideal position?

A. The Directive Principles are the directory ends of government. The Fundamental Rights are the permissible means for achieving the ends. There can be no conflict between the ends and the means. The Constitution-makers expected that a wise and efficient administration should be able to achieve the directory ends by following the permissible means. They adopted the Gandhian philosophy that the end cannot justify the means. In fact the quintessence of totalitarianism is that to achieve the end of social justice the human spirit can be crushed and the State can dominate the life of the individual.

Palkhivala: justice, not mercy.

Our Fundamental Rights are so drafted that they can never stand in the way of accomplishing the Directive Principles. In fact, several times in the course of cases which I have argued before the Supreme Court, the Supreme Court judges have asked the Counsel for the government, "Show us a single measure of social or economic reform which you are unable to achieve as a result of the Fundamental Rights." No positive answer could ever be given to this question by any Counsel. The ideal position is clear—respect human freedom while seeking to achieve the Directive Principles of social welfare.

Q. Do you think 'civil liberties' can be approached from a Marxist position? Or is the concept an essentially non-Marxist one?

A. Civil liberties and a Marxist State can never coexist. To talk of Marxist deomcracy is like talking of boiling icecream.

Q. What do you think of the work of Indian civil liberties organisations in general and of the PUCL in particular?

A. I am a member and supporter of PUCL. But in my opinion they were wrong in championing the cause of those who had been guilty of encroachments on public property.

On other issues they are doing dedicated work. We need this kind of organisation because it fights for people's rights and generates a certain consciousness among people.

Q. One of your objections to the PUCL action in the pavement dwellers case was that it prevented an official body from carrying out its duties. But surely, most civil liberties activism in India has to be directed at restraining such 'official' organisations as the police from performing what they construe as their duties?

A. The question is not of an official performing what he construes to be his duty. The real point here is that the Municipal Commissioner is performing his statutory duty—a duty about which there never was and never can be any doubt. If a public official is seeking to perform what is indisputably his duty, how can the Court prevent him from doing so? How can any Court prevent a public official from enforcing the law? It would result in absolute chaos if Courts, which are intended to assist in enforcement of the law, were to be converted into instruments for preventing such enforcement. Law and order would totally break down if such a situation were permitted to prevail.

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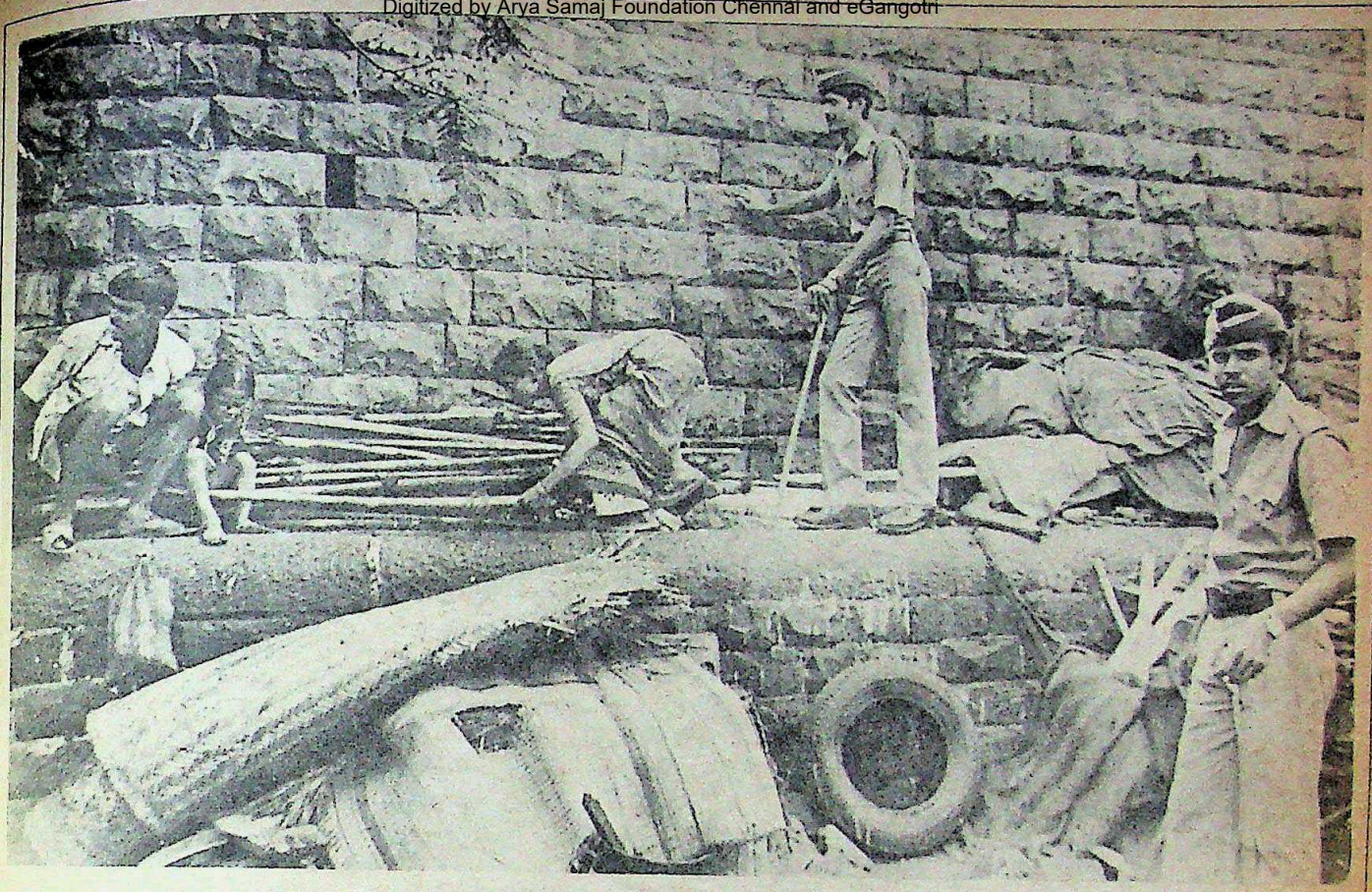

The PUCL claims that by throwing slumdwellers out of their homes the government was depriving them of their right to life.

should be consulted. Cho Ramaswamy for example, was particularly distressed when Arun Shourie, a leading light of the PUCL, came out against his anti-Naxalite resolution. Said Shourie: "If Cho's resolution is passed, it would hurt many among us. In particular, the CPI (ML) group would feel very offended as it would be construed as a direct reference to them. We cannot afford to do this." According to some observers, it was Shourie's view that really turned the tide against Cho. While Shourie is hero-worshipped by some PUCL members, there is dissatisfaction over his oracular status, even when he is only advocating expediency over principle.

Durga Bhagwat was also mystified by the PUCL's decision-making structure. When she resigned over the pavement dwellers issue, some PUCL activists said that she did not have full information about their stand. But as she points out: "If they go ahead and do things without giving their own Vice President full information—then what do they expect?"

Claude Alvares is even more scathing: "It is almost like the Congress (I)." He is disappointed by the manner in which meetings are organised and decisions taken. Certainly, the issues on which Bhagwat and Alvares resigned should have been sorted out within the organisation first, rather than becoming public controversies later.

On the other hand, it is often impossible to consult everyone in a broad-based organisation like the PUCL. Nor can there be a consensus on every issue. But there is also a deeper and more significant explanation for the recent rifts within the PUCL.

The PUCL is, almost by definition, a part-time organisation: that is, one composed of professionals who take only a part-time interest in it. The actual running of such an organisation will only be done by those who are prepared to take the most interest and devote the most time. Inevitably, such people tend to be activists whose views are more extreme than those of the relatively silent majority.

This is a common feature of all voluntary organisations. Given the very nature of their role and finances, their day to day functioning will be handled only by those who are more 'committed'—those who are prepared to sacrifice their professional and personal lives for a cause. On the other hand the rank and file of the organisation would be composed of those who are not prepared to make such sacrifices and a clash with the leadership thus becomes a near logical certainty.

There is no real solution to this. If active PUCL members are concerned about the eviction of slum dwellers, they cannot really go and consult all the Vice Presidents before acting—there simply isn't the time. And, the silent majority cannot impose the limitations of its own belief on those volunteers who are prepared to devote their time and resources to an issue.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MUKESH PARPIANI

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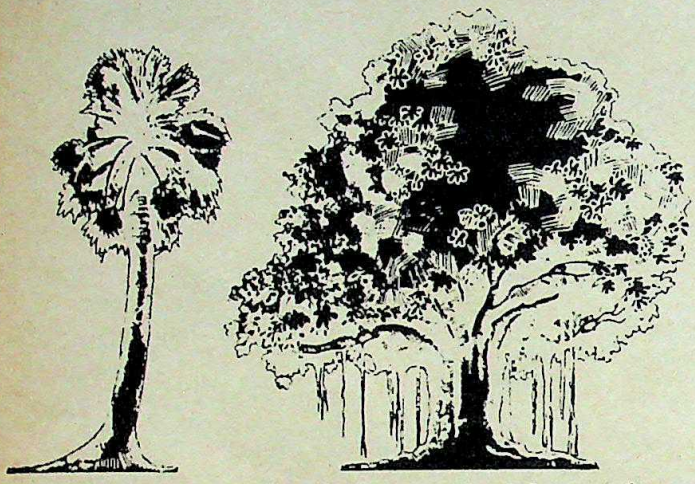
How would you like your savings to grow ?



Straight as a palm tree ? **Or like myriad branches of a banyan tree ?**

The answer obviously is quicker earnings on your savings.

There's one bank that can help you achieve this : UCOBANK through UCOPLAN.

UCOPLAN is not a savings scheme but a unique multiple-interest earning formula. You save what you can, and UCOBANK will chart out your deposits on to rewarding avenues.

Read how a simple saving of Rs. 125 a month can earn you more than Rupees One Lakh in 20 years. Through UCOPLAN. At UCOBANK.

UcoPlan

Single Savings. Multiple interest.

Deposit (Rs.)	Term	Total Earning (Rs.)
125.00 p.m.	1st 120 months	27,215.00
27,000.00	Kuber Yojna during 2nd 120 months	79,920.00
125.00 p.m.	2nd 120 months	27,215.00
Total		1,07,135.00

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UCO:CAS 127/83

THERE IS A FEELING THAT the PUCL's concept of 'civil liberties' is not as clear as one would like. Commenting on the pavement dwellers case, Nani Palkhivala obliquely criticised the PUCL's misunderstanding of the concept of rights. He argued that the crucial issue was "whether a statutory body like the Municipal Corporation which has been charged with the duty of ensuring by all reasonable means the proper maintenance of civic life in the metropolis, does in fact have the freedom to act, however belatedly, in the discharge of that duty, or whether it can be compelled, in the face of narrow populist pressures, to abdicate its basic obligations to its constituents." Or, as has also been said, was the PUCL misusing 'rights' to obstruct a statutory body? Palkhivala went on to berate those who because of their 'humanitarianism' evolved 'legally indefensible' conceptions of rights.

A criticism of the PUCL is that because in some civil liberties matters, it takes the side of the underprivileged, its members have confused supporting the underprivileged in all cases, with defending civil liberties. There is a Marxist tinge to some PUCL rhetoric that seems to have little to do with liberties. And some members like Alvares seem to have little respect for the sort of liberalism that fuels civil liberties organisations all over the world. Speaking of Tarkunde, Alvares called him 'an old fashioned liberal' and he also dismissed in print 'the colonially inherited duties of lawyers'.

Part of the problem is that there is so much injustice in India, that it seems wrong for a public-spirited organisation to declare that it will only concern itself with one kind of oppression and ignore the rest. But if the PUCL is to grow into the sort of cohesive organisation that is truly effective, then perhaps it is precisely this kind of distinction that it will have to make time and again.

As an army in peacetime, the PUCL has performed admirably. Obviously people who unite to fight an extreme situation cannot be expected to argue on all less extreme situations. And the PUCL has contributed significantly to the battle against infringement of civil liberties. Whether such rifts and disagreements will persist however, remains to be seen.

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CALLING A SPADE A SPADE

Bharat Dabholkar on 'creativity' in Indian advertising.

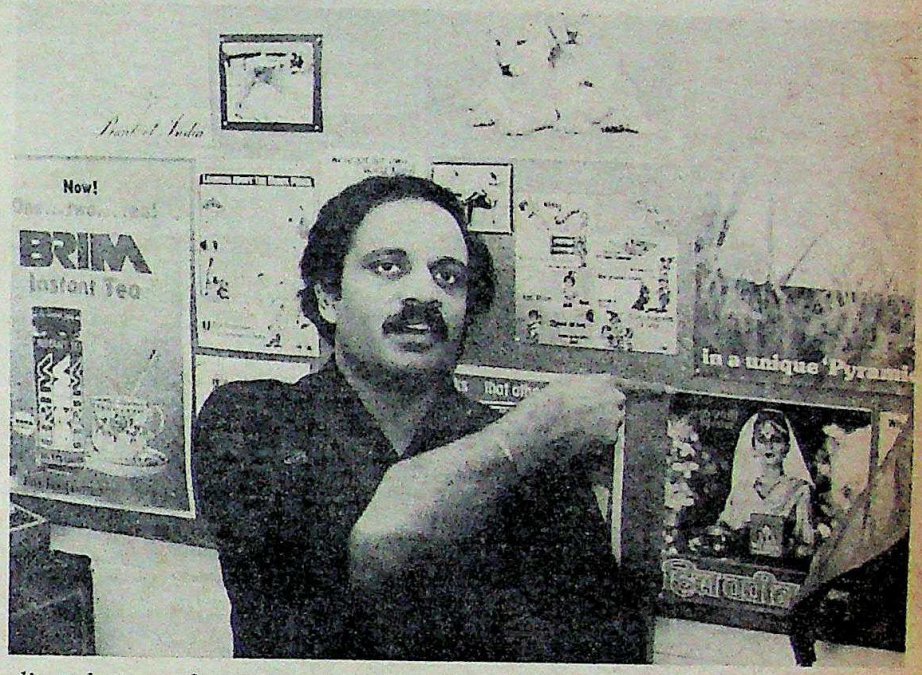
HOW DOES ONE begin writing a piece on advertising? Do you reuse some humorous quotes like 'Advertising is the most fun you can have with your clothes on' or 'Selling a product without advertising is like winking at a pretty girl in the dark?' (After all, isn't one's intelligence judged by the 'quotable quotes' one can remember?) Or at least have a title with a ring of solemnity like 'Consumer psychology in contemporary society' or 'Can advertising have built-in parametres of effectiveness?'. Decisions. Decisions.

As a wide-eyed initiate in the advertising world, I used to be very impressed by professional-sounding articles which did threadbare analysis of contemporary advertising, quoted research studies in the US, consumer trends in the UK and so on. The 'chosen few' writing all those articles were the ultimate in advertising knowledge for me. Only later did it dawn on me that we all had access to the same trade books and magazines which contained all that information. And quoting some paragraphs from these didn't really make those writers 'advertising pundits'.

An advertising expert for me, now, is a person who can create a good campaign for a given product right here in India. Otherwise it's like an impotent man just quoting Vatsayana and Koka pundit on his wedding night. The bottom line being 'you *do it* and show me'.

Well, that's enough of an opening.

To me, advertising is like a religion. The consumer is the God; the marketer, the devotee; and the advertising agent, the priest. And a good priest is the one who talks in a simple language and tells you easy, uncomplicated ways to reach God. If the priest in advertising, like most other religions, creates an aura of exclusive knowledge, buries the simple jargon and creates a complicated maze of creativity in order to perpetuate the dominant role of himself and his tribe, then it's time for some plain, commonsense thinking.



An advertising person is like an expert tea or wine-taster. If you don't have the in-built instinct to create and recognise good concepts and need the constant crutches of consumer research studies and other neo-management paraphernalia, then you shouldn't be in advertising in the first place. And if you are doing something right, then not knowing the right management terminology for that action, doesn't make it wrong. Right words don't matter—right actions do. Most of us know how to spell Mercedes Benz but can't ever afford to sit in one, while a non-articulate, nouveau-riche calls it 'merchidy car' and owns three of them.

Now, before my fellow professionals jump at my throat, let us all have an honest look at ourselves. Take tea advertising for instance. There are loose teas, packet teas, leaf teas, dust teas, premium and popular blends. When I wrote my first tea ad, I was under the innocent impression that most people wanted a 'good strong cup of tea which had a good taste/flavour'. Then I found lots of people from different agencies spending thousands of rupees to find out what a consumer looks for in a good tea. The technical terms being—what are the perceivable and non-perceivable attributes that the consumer rates high on his 'preference scale' (wow!). And when they finished talking to consumers in the South, they would go to consumers in the North. And believe me, I have gone through a lot of studies done for a lot of teas, by different companies. And from Kashmir to Kanyakumari the tea attributes that get rated high on these 'preference scales' are 'good, strong teas with a good taste/flavour'. Studies for all competitive brands ultimately arrived at this gospel truth.

Obviously, what they should have been doing was to accept this basic commonsense premiss (it is hearsay, of course, but there are lots of down-to-earth people in advertising also) and to concentrate their monetary and creative efforts on devising attractive different ways of saying 'strong tea with good taste'.

It will also help a lot if some of the new entrants in advertising have middle

Bharat Dabholkar, Account Director at da Cunha Associates, is one of the men behind the Amul hoardings.

PHOTOGRAPH BY AYESHA SONI

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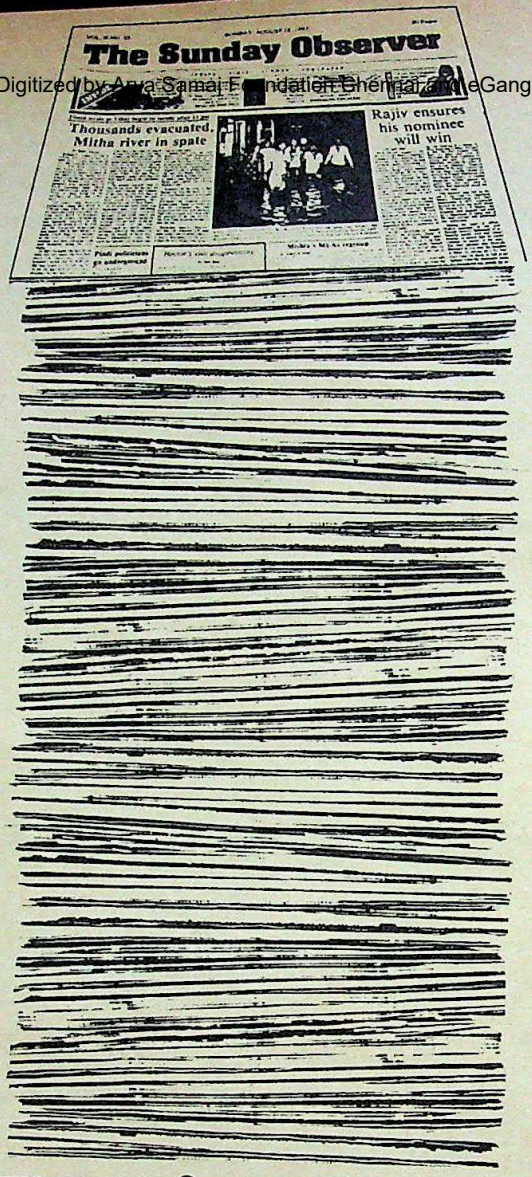

THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM AT THE TOP

What is needed is the drive to get there and the determination to carve a niche for oneself.

In two years, The Sunday Observer has not only maintained its unique position as India's one and only Sunday newspaper — it has also consolidated its reputation as a top ranking, thought-provoking publication. One that weighs the pros and cons of the subject under review and encourages healthy debate. On political, religious, social, moral or cultural issues. So you can read, chew and digest them at leisure. And form your own opinion. For or against.

The Sunday Observer

AT THE TOP AT TWO–THANKS TO YOU

impressions-2390

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class backgrounds. Let's look at it this way. A major segment of your consumers, for most mass products, is in the middle and upper middle class. How can a public school type, sitting in swanky clubs every evening, ever understand how his major target group feels, lives and buys. And can any number of fact-finding studies really give him an insight into the deep psyche of this consumer? It is high time advertising professionals started recruiting people who understand this consumer because they are a part of them. For an advertisement to talk the language of the people, the advertising man should talk the language of the people.

Why should the original idea always be thought of in English at all? Why make advertising as restrictive as English theatre? Why have a handful of people churning out foreign rehashes (unless you *like* Woody Allen with a Parsi accent), when there is such a lot of talent in other languages just waiting to be tapped? As an advertiser, how many times have you rejected a Marathi advertisement as being too high-flown because some managers in your office, with names like Mr Sharma or Mr Kulkarni, thought so? Have you stopped to think that these managers may not necessarily be reading literature in those magazines even if their mother-tongue is Marathi or Hindi? And that those thousands of your consumers who read novels and magazines only in that language will not find your ad high-flown? In simplifying the ad you are also insulting the literacy and intelligence of your consumer.

Advertising is, really, quite a simple profession. It's an idea business. And creativity is a spark. You either get it, or you don't get it. There is nothing like 'creativity by committee'. Let's see how this simple process works. You have to advertise a product that is more or less like other products in the market. Now no matter how many papers you've read about 'me too' products not selling and the need to project a USP (Unique Selling Proposition), you can't always find a USP that's perceivably beneficial. So, you create an ad that's different from others. You've just arrived at the very first pitfall. While making your ad different and nice, how 'different' should your approach be? Most ads get so different that their 'attention getting' ability increases manifold and the product to be sold barely gets breathing space under the unhindered creative expressions of the art director and the copywriter.

A clown can't sell but a witty salesman can. A welcome new emergence is that of hardsell, non-snobbish commercials on the scene. I have met a lot of people who, while condemning as pedestrian, have played back the full commercials of Vicco and Nirma. And before anybody pooh-poohs that as a result of constant repetition, remember that other great creative ads don't get memorable without repetition either. Don't you use colour double spreads in leading magazines in order to get noticed? That time we don't hear the plus points of dominant size.

How can a public school type, sitting in swanky clubs every evening, ever understand how his major target group feels, lives and buys?

There is also this great shying away from calling a spade a spade. Recently, I wrote an ad for a computer company which created a minor storm. All the ads for different computers were so full of great futuristic photographic angles and high falutin headlines that a direct, hard-hitting ad stood out like a sore thumb. It's so strange that you get such instant reactions to a simple and straightforward ad. It happened like this. There was this double spread ad released by a competitor which featured their computer on the left-hand page and the right-hand page was kept 'reserved for any other computer that can match the features of our computer'. My client's computer had superior features, so we reproduced their entire ad and made use of the blank page to show the superiority of the features of our product over theirs.

Very simple. No beating around the bush. In the age of consumerism where the consumer is deemed to have a right to know the absolute truth, shouldn't *all* advertising be direct, down-to-earth and frank? In the old days, wives wouldn't refer to their husbands by their names. They resorted to the *humare woh, sun rahe ho* type of reference. Most ads today are like those wives. What's the use of showing a modern layout and pussyfooting it when it comes to 'naming names'? Why hide in the sanctuary of vague phrases like 'other similar products', 'other leading brands', 'Brand X'? If the superiority claims made in your ad are not subjective and can be backed by hard, factual data then it's absolutely necessary to present them honestly and not play cute games with consumers.

The only answer to 'is this type of advertising good?' is 'what other type is there?'. People often ask if such ads are legal and ethical. As a lawyer, I am very clear. It is absolutely legal as long as your claims are truthful and backed by facts. And any presentation that's honest and for the good of the majority is totally ethical, unless one has other convenient definitions of the word 'ethical'.

As far as our ad was concerned, there was this very cocky ad (not a very original one to start with, and nothing wrong in that) leaving a full page blank for its competitors. This big brother offering you a club and saying please, oh please, hit me hard. Talk about opportunity on a silver platter! Now, since we had featured their ad, logo and all, someone was bound to say 'but this ad gives publicity to the competitor as well'. But of course it does. Why not? Do you know how many pages in *Ramayana* are devoted to describing Ravana and other demons? The more publicity you give your opponent the better you look when you are proved superior. (Makes sense, doesn't it?) In these matters, the advertisement, *per se* is not important. What's important is the benefit of additional and honest information to the consumer.

Which is what all advertising is supposed to be about. Isn't it? ♦

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We're spending Rs. 2 million a month on Research and Development

At our Basic Research Centre in Bombay, scientists work in one of the best research environments to discover new drugs. Sometimes, within reach of the goal, work on a specific project has to be discontinued for various reasons. Our scientists gain experience.

The path to a new drug is long and arduous. Development work takes up to ten years. The odds of finding a successful compound are 1 in 8000.

Our research is based on natural products, soil and marine samples and medicinal plants. To date, 45,000 soil and marine samples and 2,000 medicinal plants have been screened and 1,000 synthetic compounds isolated. Emphasis is on cardiovascular, infectious and tropical diseases.

In the last 10 years a number of active compounds have been discovered. Three of these, Forskolin, Trequinsin and HL 640 are unique drugs with tremendous therapeutic potential.

Pharmaceutical Research is costly and risky. Yet, we have already spent Rs. 16 crores and will be spending Rs. 2.4 crores in 1983. We do it because, traditionally, we in India and the Hoechst Group worldwide, have enormous faith in research for a healthier future for all of us.

Today's and tomorrow's research must be financed by the drugs we are selling today.

27 1956-1983 Years of Service

Hoechst

HOECHST PHARMACEUTICALS LIMITED

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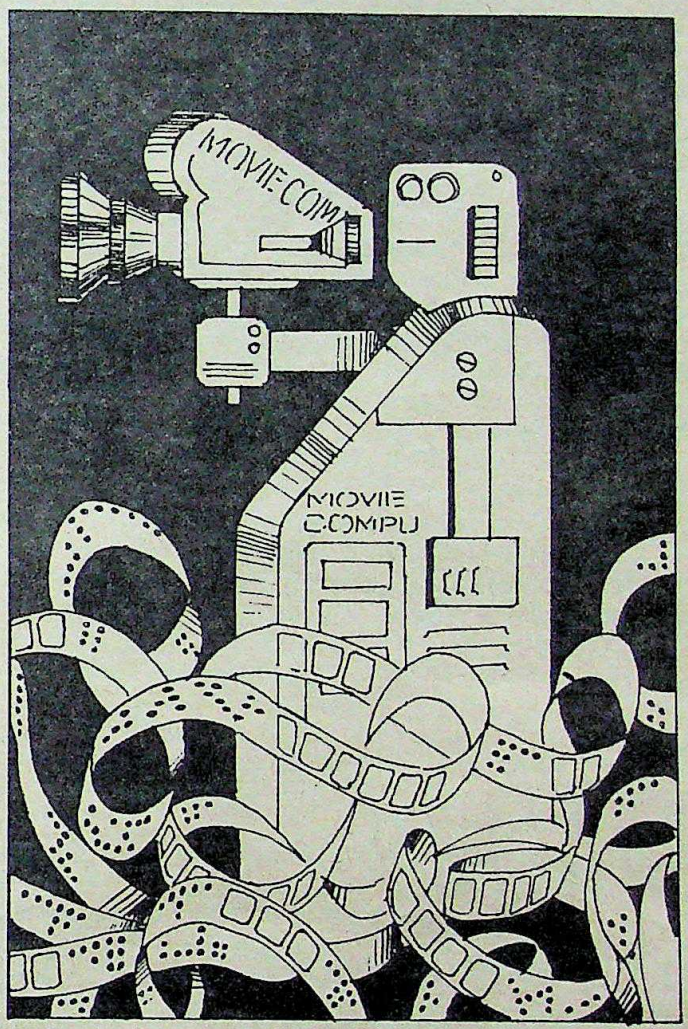
COMPUTER CINEMA

Amit Khanna on the advent of 'electronic' cinema.

IT IS A paradox. The business of selling dreams and creating illusions—cinema—is gradually leaning on science and technology to make 'real' such illusions. Films, TV and video have today become a testing ground of the latest technology. In fact, this all-enveloping art form is gradually turning into a meticulous science.

It was Francis Ford Coppola who publicly heralded the advent of the 'Electronic Cinema' at the 51st Annual Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Science telecast when he said : "We are on the eve of something that's going to make the industrial revolution look like a small out of town try-out. I can see a communication revolution that's about music and art movies and digital electronics and satellites, but above all human talent and it's going to make the masters of the cinema, from whom we've inherited this business, believe things that they would have thought impossible."



Still in its early development, the 'Electronic Cinema' makes possible the previsualisations of the planned film. This begins with the process of optical transfer of story-bound sketches on to a video disc or tape. Then, the recorded dialogue of the film, plus music and sound, is added to the script many months before the start of actual filming.

The process allows the director to control and adjust all elements as he shoots. This technology is now being gradually used for actual film-making. *Tron* for example, has very successfully utilised this format. Using a word processor, the script is fed into a computer along with all possible permutations and combinations.

Special effects like dissolves, freezes and matting are also 'encoded'. The director, can then, on a mere press of a button, see what he has created. The use of a computenal image generators system can now provide a director with a console. Using various key boards, control key functions and light-pen (literally, a pen using a beam of light to write on a TV screen) in place of a traditional pencil and paper, the creation of a drawing is delineated on a TV monitor. Then, using a computer, various image configurations can be observed. As the video technology progresses, cinematography on tape is becoming more and more popular. With the introduction of sophisticated equipment by giants like Ekagami, Toshiba, Sony, Bosch, Philips and NEC, one can expect a gradual switch from film to tape. The problems of resolution, sharpness, clarity and definition are gradually being overcome. Besides, editing on tape with the assistance of time-codes which are recorded on the tape along with the pictures and sound, makes the use of a computer possible. There is no messing around with cuttings, negatives and double takes.

Gone are the days of bulky studio cameras and giant arc-lights (aptly called Brutes). Electronics spearheaded by ever-changing microchips have changed the shapes of cameras. Variable speeds, auto-focus, gyro-controlled movements, nickel cadmium batteries and two-pin registration have all contributed to a clearer picture. Optics have also developed accordingly. Fast lenses (Stanley Kubrick's famous candle-light sequence from *Barry Lyndon* was shot with a lens having an apperture of 0.7) and equally fast films (currently Kodak is marketing a 400 ASA film in 35 mm) have made cinematography possible in poor light. Contraptions like the Lorna Crane, an intricate marvel of mechanics and electronics, give the filmmaker a total command over the ambience in his film. Matting, special effects are so advanced today that you have almost to be a scientist to understand their usage and application. Sound too has changed. Using cordless microphones and stereophony, filmmakers have begun to use sound as a major ingredient in their illusions. 'Dimension 180' and 'Sensuarround' employ special speaker systems in the auditoria to create more realistic audio-effects. Digital Sound (also digital scene simulation) is making

Amit Khanna is a film producer, director and lyricist. He writes frequently on film technology.

ILLUSTRATION BY BHATLEKAR

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its way into the movies.

What the impact of these developments on Indian conditions will be, is difficult to assess. But, we can expect more video theatres (regular theatres using a giant screen, and a VCR to project films) more video films and a lot of interaction between tape and the feature film industry.

Video is progressing at such a fast and furious pace that all we can be sure of is that more of today's most outrageous ideas will soon become a reality. In the course of these changes, there will be improvements in the versatility, quality and scope of existing systems. Novel technologies will make video a near perfect communications system.

As video becomes cheaper and more accessible, more and more VCR owners will suddenly become video movie directors. This will be made possible by means of narrower, 8mm tape and the CCD, (Charge Coupled Device) which is already being incorporated into the new generation of video cameras. The CCD is a microchip which effectively replaces the camera tube, reducing the camera's weight. Although prototypes do not yet produce recordings of professional quality, this new camera responds to much lower light than a conventional video camera and is immune from burning by overbright light sources.

Today, even the best video is limited in quality by the coarse screens on which it is projected. Researchers in Japan are already working toward the 2,000 line television picture which will, for the first time, compete in quality with 35mm film. When pictures of such clarity and detail can be scanned by a CCD device and reassembled on large-screen systems, the way should be clear for another step forward, namely increased speed and ease of copying of video recordings. At present, copying involves inevitable loss of sharpness and quality because the copying machine is trying to draw an accurate picture of a fluctuating signal. If however, the signal is recorded as a set of precise digits, each specifying a particular element of brightness or colour, the recording becomes a rigid set of instructions with no loss of quality.

By the end of the century, video will be everywhere: in homes, offices, schools and factories, in supermarkets and sports stadia. Video, linked to computers, will spearhead the new industrial revolution. To aid and to entertain, video will change from being a single entity into a whole system.

Naturally all these fascinating new technological developments will change the very nature of cinema as an art form for they will not only help make a filmmaker's job easier but also open new avenues. Filmmaker's will not only venture into many subjects that are now considered 'unfilmable' but new cinematic forms are also likely to evolve. ♦

Give away this magnificent book as gift this year

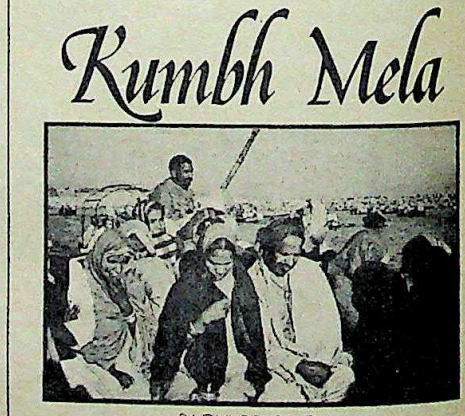
Kumbh Mela

Photographs and Text by Raghubir Singh.

60 pages. 35 pages in full colour. 9″ x 9″.

Hardcover.

Nothing on the face of the earth can surpass the Purna Kumbh Mela at Allahabad. It is a month-long mela which attracts twenty million people. To witness the attachment of these people to Ganga, India's sacred river, around its confluence with the Jamuna, during the Kumbh Mela, is the experience of a lifetime.



RAGHUBIR SINGH

Raghubir Singh, whose photographs in "Ganga" and "Calcutta" have won wide acclaim, participated in the great mela of 1966, again in the Ardh Kumbh Mela of 1971 and in the last great Purna Kumbh Mela of 1977. On these occasions Raghubir Singh felt the ethos of the Ganga and its magnetic pull on the people of all India and set about capturing in photographs the many moods and facets of the great mela. The result is this extraordinary portrait of the Kumbh Mela. The book is printed in Italy and published by The Perennial Press, Hong Kong. Originally priced at Rs.116.25, **Kumbh Mela** is now offered to you at a special price of Rs.85.

Send your order to

Business Press Private Limited,

Surya Mahal, 2nd Floor, 5 Burjorji Bharucha Marg, Bombay 400 023.

(Telephone: 270310 / 272018)

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IN PRAISE OF MUSHROOMS

Aphrodisiacs, hallucinogens and gourmet delicacies.

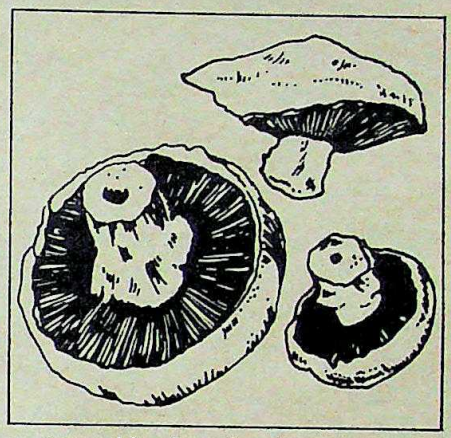
THE MUSHROOM IS one of those strange vegetables that all of us are acquainted with, but will rarely use in our own kitchens. We've heard the stories of its aphrodisiac properties, we know how it caused hallucinations among the hippies of Haight-Ashbury, and most of us have seen the bright, over-priced cans that the Kasauli farms churn out by the thousands.

But mushrooms have never formed an integral part of Indian cuisine; they are usually quite expensive and many people still harbour the suspicion that they cause food poisoning. So, they remain minority interests, bought by a select few and used mainly by the restaurants of the large hotels.

This is a pity, because the mushroom is an extraordinarily versatile vegetable that can, with the bare minimum of cooking, take on interesting and unusual flavours. It is equally at home in Indian, Chinese or Western cuisine and can be used for a variety of delicious snacks.

The most common mushroom here is the cultivated or 'forced' mushroom (*champignon de Paris*). As its name suggests, this mushroom does not grow wild and is cultivated on farms. Mushroom cultivation is a technical process requiring trays, albumen and the spores that function as seeds. It is fast catching on all over India but Kasauli in Himachal Pradesh is still the leading centre.

Generally, the cultivated mushroom is the blandest of all. It lacks the strong flavours of wild mushrooms and has to be glazed or spiced to be enjoyed fully. Even then, a good rule of thumb is that the larger the mushroom, the more flavour it has. The button or small, unopened, bud-like mushroom is immature and therefore, largely flavourless. Sadly most Indian mushrooms come on to the market when they are still buttons. I've heard two explanations for this. One is that the cultivators are interested in a high turn over and don't really have the patience to wait for the mushrooms to grow to



a reasonable size. Another is that the spore we use in India does not yield very large mushrooms.

Cultivated mushrooms are available all over the country. Unfortunately most shops sell the canned versions. Why mushroom farmers insist on canning their products is something I have never worked out. As anybody who has eaten a soggy mushroom that has been drowned in brine for weeks on end will agree, there is no surer way of killing the natural flavour. Abroad, canned mushrooms are used only for sauces and are considered unfit to substitute for the real, fresh thing.

Fresh mushrooms are now available at most places, but can sometimes be hard to find. Himachal Pradesh remains the major source of supply for the North, and Bangalore supplies the South. But as more and more farmers take to mushroom cultivation, new suppliers are opening up: a significant proportion of Bombay's mushrooms come from the hill-stations of the Western Ghats.

Fresh or canned, mushrooms are expensive. They are cheaper in Delhi than in Bombay, but even so they are priced higher than most vegetables. The cost of cultivation explains some of the difference, but there is no earthly reason why canned mushrooms should cost more—pound for pound—than chicken. The newer suppliers are undercutting the Kasauli barons so perhaps there will be a price war that will benefit the consumer.

Even at this high price, mushrooms remain a good buy because of their versatility. There are few Western dishes that mushrooms cannot improve. They add a nice texture to pies, can easily be sliced into the sauce for a *coq au vin*.

Their suitability to Indian cookery is less established. The morrel (or *guchhi*) of Kashmir is a rich man's dish, but even the cultivated mushroom (*dhingri*) can substitute easily for it. Mushrooms can substitute for potatoes in most curries, and go well with peas, chicken and *saag*.

They are least commonly used as snack-foods though this is something they are ideally suited to. Mushroom sandwiches, made from sliced, fried mushrooms and a cold meat filling are delicious, and *masala* mushrooms (either on toast or by themselves) form a perfect accompaniment to cocktails.

We are unfortunate in India in lacking access to other varieties of mushrooms. Morrels are too expensive and the dried, dark mushrooms of Chinese cuisine (available in Calcutta) do not adapt themselves to Indian or French food. I've seen wood mushrooms on sale in Bombay, but their availability is limited. And even if you live in a place where mushrooms grow wild, it is not advisable to pick them up and cook them—some varieties are poisonous.

But what of the mushroom legends? Are they really hallucinogens? Well, yes, some of them are. But if you expect to be transformed into Timothy Leary after a bite of the cultivated mushroom, then you will be disappointed—those mushrooms are not sold here. And are they really aphrodisiacs? The current medical view is that there are *no* aphrodisiac foods. Nevertheless, some more worldly doctors admit that empirical evidence suggests a link between mushrooms and libido.

There is of course, only one way for you to find out for sure!

— *Vikram Sinha*

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Jehangir Sabavala

Interviewed By Malavika Sanghvi
Photographed By Ashok Gupta

THE FIRST THING that strikes one about artist Jehangir Sabavala's studio, is the almost ascetic simplicity of the room. It is a tiny area, 16 feet by 12 feet long (as the artist himself says, 'no larger than a pin') and lies close to the entrance to his Altamount Road apartment in Bombay. By any standards it is stark, holding only those items that are absolutely essential to Sabavala's profession. But when seen in relation to the rest of the house, which is scattered with antique frames, tapestry, and rosewood furniture, (all part of the artist's inheritance) the simplicity seems deliberate.

The room lies in a south-westerly direction and is lined on both these sides by windows. The artist who always paints by natural light, places his easels facing south and with the help of venetian blinds, can alter and often filter the light to suit his needs.

Since everything is geared to the central idea of painting and of utility, there is not much that catches the visitor's eye, except of course, the magnificent canvasses stacked neatly against the northerly wall. Opposite are two adjoining desks, both with narrow drawers which hold boxes and boxes of paints. These drawers also contain other tools of the trade.

By these tables there is a simple, single chair on which the artist sits when he is sketching on the table. More often than not though, he prefers to stand, doing his charcoal sketches, overlooking a magnificent view of the greenery of Altamount Road and further, the vast stretch of Bombay's skyline against Marine Drive.

The room is open to noises and intrusions of all kinds. Here birds twitter next door, a radio spews commentary, or inside the house, a phone jangles. Sabavala is quite content with all of it, in fact he believes that the sights and sounds of everyday life are important props for his working-style and he wouldn't dream of shutting them out. "In fact," he says, when asked whether the household moves around on tiptoe while he is painting, "nobody pays me the least attention and if the phone rings, I answer it." A suggestion that he air-condition the little room for further privacy, is met with a wrinkling of the nose.

Utility and tidiness are the two facets of Sabavala's studio. Near his tables ('made by some local carpenter: nothing fancy'—he says) are a lower set of open shelves, which hold the rest of the artist's paraphernalia. Big bottles of turpentine and linseed oil, boxes of unused oils, neat little squares of cloth to keep handy and a row of copper and brass jars that hold his collection of brushes are placed in ascending order on the top shelf. These jars are probably the room's only concession to frivolity, as they are not mere jars, but ancient measures, picked up from Chor Bazaar a while ago.

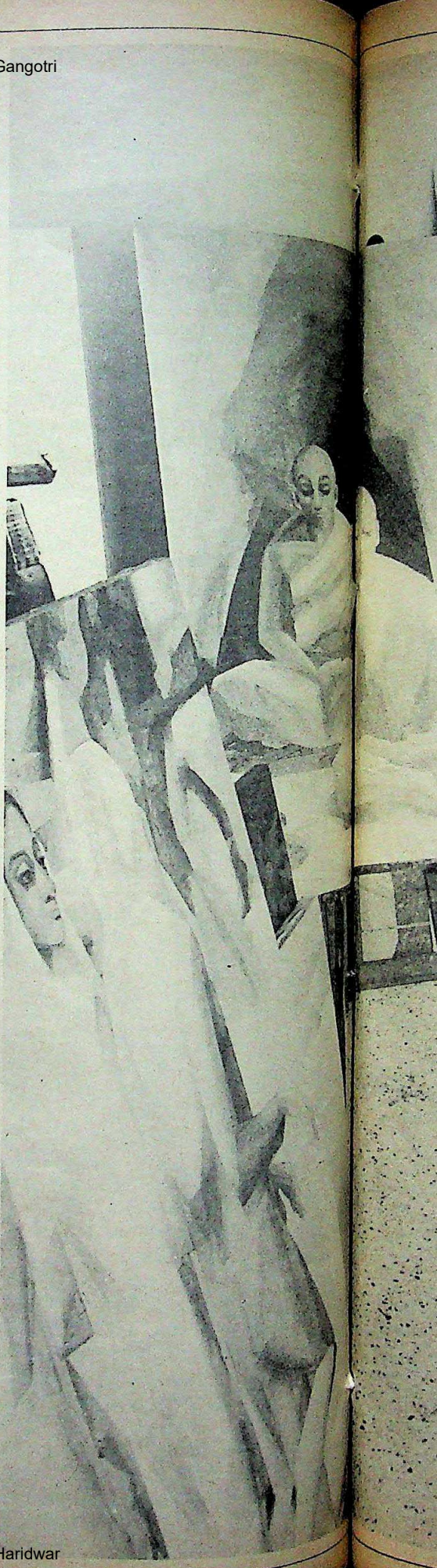
Near this low shelf and under the southern facing window is a low settee, on which visitors, or potential buyers can be seated. Sabavala, though he is acutely aware of the small dimensions of the room, is quite happy to let visitors, even strangers, who wish to view his paintings into this room and describes this intrusion upon his work as a 'flattering one'.

These then are the contents of Sabavala's studio, give or take a brush or two. Sabavala, who has painted in a profusion of studios as a young artist in his Paris days and until two decades ago, in a roomy old studio, overlooking a garden at Malabar Hill, has quite come to terms with the tiny dimensions of his present one.

"The idea is not to have a great studio, but to do great paintings," says the artist, who has exhibitions coming up next month in Bombay and Calcutta.

"Basically to produce a painting one must have a little privacy, good light and a small space," he says.

Besides of course, if it is vast spaces one is looking for, then they're all there, aren't they, in Sabavala's canvasses of haunting vistas? ♦



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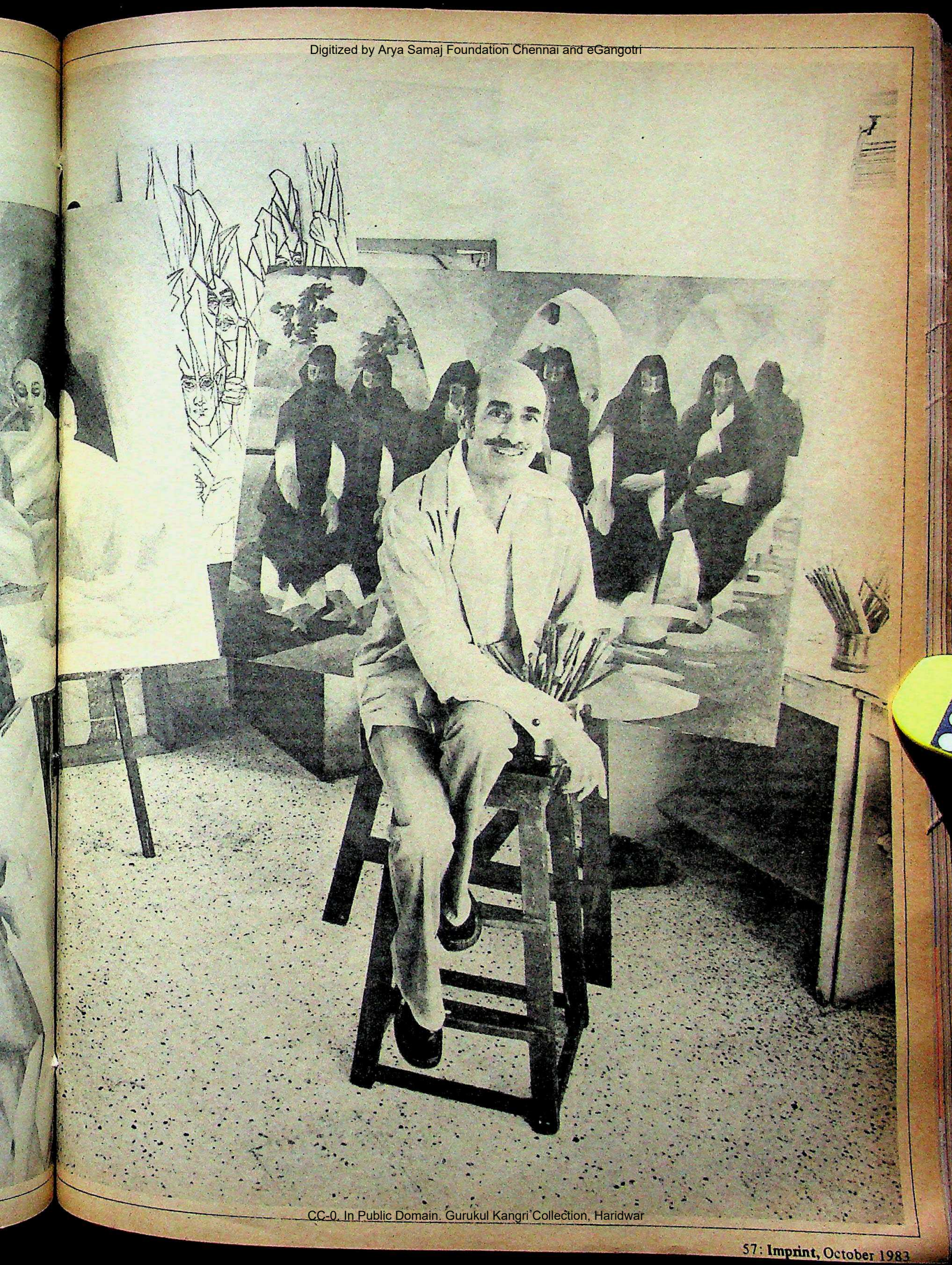

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Fiction in imprint

CARGO FROM SINGAPORE

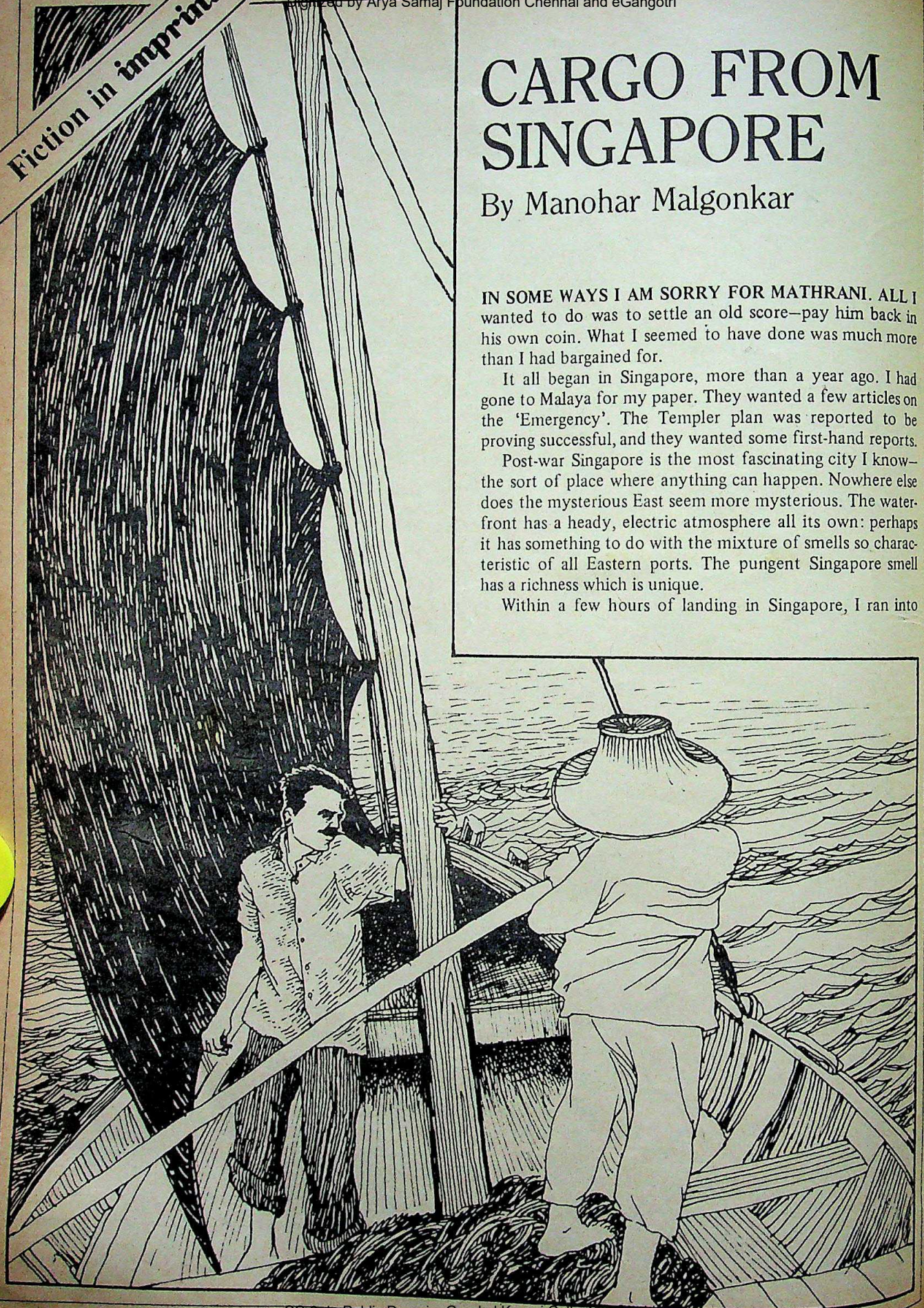
By Manohar Malgonkar

IN SOME WAYS I AM SORRY FOR MATHRANI. ALL I wanted to do was to settle an old score—pay him back in his own coin. What I seemed to have done was much more than I had bargained for.

It all began in Singapore, more than a year ago. I had gone to Malaya for my paper. They wanted a few articles on the 'Emergency'. The Templer plan was reported to be proving successful, and they wanted some first-hand reports.

Post-war Singapore is the most fascinating city I know—the sort of place where anything can happen. Nowhere else does the mysterious East seem more mysterious. The waterfront has a heady, electric atmosphere all its own: perhaps it has something to do with the mixture of smells so characteristic of all Eastern ports. The pungent Singapore smell has a richness which is unique.

Within a few hours of landing in Singapore, I ran into



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some friends. British officers of the old Indian army who were now serving in the Far Eastern Land Forces in Malaya. Singapore, and the whole of Malaya, is full of old Indian army officers. You run into them everywhere, friendly and full of 'Do you remember. . . .' My friends were very helpful. Thanks to them, I was able to travel over most of the peninsula. They even arranged a light plane trip to an outpost in Negri Sembilan. I wrote some really snappy articles for my paper, all from the 'on-the-spot' angle. None of these was published; they didn't fall in line with my paper's policy. When I got back to Singapore after my round of the interior, I got a longish wire from my Editor telling me what he thought of my articles and I am afraid I sent him one back, rather thoughtlessly, resigning my job.

That has little to do with this story, except that it explains why I happened to be in Singapore and at a loose end in September last year.

I had saved some money and, living in a modest hotel, I could have carried on for months. Actually, if I had wanted to, I could have easily got a job there. One of my old Indian Army friends is now a big noise in Radio Malaya and, as soon as he heard that I had resigned, he offered me a job in the Radio Station, just for old times' sake. If you have been in the Indian Army during the war, you certainly don't lack friends in Singapore.

But I didn't take the job. I wanted to get back to India, although I was in no hurry, and for the time being I was content to aestivate in the warm haze of Singapore. I spent my time wandering along the outer reaches of the waterfront, threading my way through the crowded Malay kampongs and watching the assortment of strange craft, when the idea struck me: Why not journey back to India in one of those sailing boats?

The more I thought about it, the more fascinating it seemed. I had never travelled in a sailing boat in my life, not even in one of those small dinghies with their snow-white sails that one sees strutting about near Ballard Pier in Bombay. To travel all the way from Singapore to India in a sailing boat seemed to be what I had wanted to do all my life.

For the next few days, I made inquiries from all kinds of shipping agents. But their response was discouraging. They did not know of any

To sail all the way from Singapore to India seemed to be what I had always wanted to do.

country boats which could take me on as a passenger. They were all quite certain that such boats did make occasional journeys between Malay and Indian ports, but they never seemed to carry passengers. One or two Chinese agents vaguely promised to see what they could do, but they didn't give me much hope. It was not easy to get a passage, they said, it depended on a lot of things, and then they proceeded to give me a formidable list of the factors it depended on.

At the end of the week, I was quite fed up with my Chinese agents; they would never tell me anything definite; and I had at last resigned myself to giving up the idea.

Then one day, I was talking to Walter Arnold about it. He is the chap who works in Radio Malaya. He was the only one who did not laugh at me, as most others had done. He pursed his lips and tapped his head in an unconsciously theatrical gesture, as though he were in deep thought. Then he said, "The only man who might be able to help you is Mathrani. In fact, I'm almost certain he will be able to help you. He is supposed to know all the country-craft Nakhodas."

"Where do I get hold of this man?" I asked.

"It is easy enough to get hold of him," he said. "Everyone seems to know him; he is perhaps the most well-known character on the waterfront. Any sampan man in the harbour will tell you where to get hold of him." Then Walter paused and looked at me. "It is just that he is a bit on the shady side. Not quite *pucca*-sahib; you know what I mean. I am not sure you will want to meet him."

Walter did not laugh as he said this, but I did. Obviously, Walter still regarded me as the typical Indian Army officer of the old days, with inflexible rules about what is done and what is not done; brought up in the tradition that one must 'never be seen on the wrong side of the counter,' particularly with the regimental tie on. It was all very well in the Army, being particular about people you associated with, but in my profession—as a newspaper man—you couldn't go on being squeamish. I told Walter so.

I met Mathrani the next day, at the Cholon-Bar. He seemed to spend most of his day there, and had an air-conditioned office on the first floor. Walter thought that he owned the Cholon-Bar, but he wasn't sure.

The Cholon-Bar on Johore Road is said to be an exact replica of one of the famous nightclubs in New York. It was all chromium and yellow leather, and thick blue carpets; and, of course, air-conditioned. It was quite empty when I got there, soon after eleven, and Mathrani was waiting for me.

He was a well-built man in his early thirties and he was dressed in that somewhat flashy manner favoured by the wealthier Indian merchants in Singapore. He wore a beige sharkskin suit, pressed to perfection, and a purple silk shirt. His wide tie and the handkerchief, which was kept in position with a gold-capped pen and pencil set, were of the same material; and they both had designs of enormous, blue pineapples. His socks matched too, and his shoes were the most aggressive shade of what the American magazines call 'tan'. It was enough to put anyone off.

But the way he dressed had nothing to do with me. He was an affable enough man. He welcomed me with a dazzling smile, held out his gold cigarette case, and said, "Time for a Tiger?"

For a few seconds I blinked uncomprehendingly. Then I said, "Yes, of course. Thank you." Tiger beer is perhaps the most widely advertised product in Singapore; even most of the clocktowers in the city display the

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slogan. Whenever you look up to see the time, enormous scarlet signs remind you that it is 'Time for a Tiger'.

We sat down, and the boy brought our beer. And Mathrani said, "So you want to go to Calcutta on a sailing boat?"

"Yes," I said, "or to any Indian port."

For several seconds, Mathrani looked at the tip of his burning cigarette. Then he smiled—a meaningful, foxy sort of smile—and, still studying the tip of his cigarette, asked me: "What is it?"

"What do you mean, 'What is it?' " I asked.

Mathrani smiled again, but he did not say anything. He waited for me to speak, as though he thought I was evading a direct answer to his question.

"What do you mean, 'What is it?' " I asked again.

"There is usually a reason, you know," he said, "A very sound reason why anyone should want to travel all the way in a sailing boat. You know the speed at which most of them travel?"

"What? Four, five miles per hour?"

"That's about it. And how far do you think it is to Cal?"

"One thousand six hundred and seventy-six miles," I said. I had checked up the distance in an atlas.

"Well it won't be as far as that. I might as well tell you that if I can arrange a passage for you it will be from Penang. About 1,200 miles from Cal. Even so, it will take you every bit of three weeks, counting all the delays."

"I've got all the time in the world," I said.

"And it won't be any cheaper than travelling by first class boat, or even by air."

"I know that," I said.

Mathrani crushed his cigarette in the ash-tray. "What gives?" he said, suddenly lapsing into American and again smiling that knowing smile of his.

Then I caught his meaning. I said, "I am not trying to smuggle anything, if that's what you are hinting at. It's just that. . ."

"Boyhood ambition, what?" he said, and grinned.

"More or less," I said. "I have never sailed in a sailing boat in my life. As you know, I am a journalist. I thought the experience would be good for me."

"Oh," he said, "I see." And he nodded his head several times. "Well I'll give Mr Arnold a ring. Ready for another?"

"No, thank you," I said.

I left the Cholon-Bar feeling rather small. I didn't like Mathrani. But he certainly was a fast worker, for when I went to the Radio Malaya office in the Cathay skyscraper the next day, Walter told me that he had already rung up about my passage.

"Tell me more about Mathrani," I said.

Walter gave me a smile. "You don't like him?" he asked.

"Well, no."

"I didn't think you would," he said. "Although everyone seems to know him, no one knows much about him. See what I mean? He throws the most lavish parties in Singapore, but the people you meet there are, shall we say, a little odd. They say he is involved in all kinds of rackets. Someone also told me he is a Customs informer."

"What is that?" I asked.

"You know, the chap who assists in detecting smugglers. A lot of things are said to be smuggled from Singapore—gold, and dope, and things like that. Mathrani is believed to be one of those who pass on information to foreign ports. It is said they get quite a good rake-off from whatever the Customs blokes discover as a result of their tip-offs."

"Oh, now I see," I said. "He must have thought I was trying to smuggle something into India. . . ."

"Oh, no," Walter said and laughed. Then he got the Cholon-Bar on the telephone and passed the receiver to me and there was Mathrani's syrupy, bland voice again.

Mathrani told me that a boat was due to leave Penang in three days and, if I could get there, he had arranged that I should get a passage in it to Calcutta. His last words to me were, "I hope you accomplish your. . .er boyhood ambition,"—and I didn't like the way he said it at all.

I flew to Penang the next day and caught my boat in good time. The voyage was fully as fascinating as I had hoped it would be, but it was horribly uncomfortable. The boat was a small 90-tonne affair with dirty, patched up sails and it seemed to creak in every joint. All the space I had to myself was a corner of the minute deck.

Aldous Huxley has somewhere written about the 'odours which crowded humanity naturally exhales'. I have never been so persistently aware of the smell as during those 19 days. The only time that the smell was less strong was when it was overpowered by the smell of burning dried fish, which was twice a day; and even that was a relief.

I am now glad I have made that journey; but I wouldn't like to do it again. I think once in a lifetime is quite enough. I was never more glad to see the sights of suburban Calcutta. I looked at the grimy landscape with all the longing of Sinbad returning from one of his more harrowing adventures. But my dreams of lying soaking in a hot bath within a few hours in some lush hotel in Calcutta and ordering my first real dinner in 19 days did not materialise. Although we reached Calcutta in

His last words were, "I hope you accomplish your . . .er boyhood ambitions."

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the late afternoon, I had to spend the night in the boat—guarded by two Customs sepoys.

WE WERE STILL about a mile from the harbour when the Customs launch accosted us, and soon an impressive detachment of officials boarded the boat. Several times in the past, I had gone through the dreadful ordeal of an Indian Customs examination, and although I knew how irritating these examinations could be, I had no idea that this one would take 24 hours. At first I even welcomed the presence of the Customs people on the boat. I thought I would have a pleasant chat with them, for during my journey from Penang I had been condemned to almost complete silence, since I and the Malay crew had no language in common.

But I soon realised this was no ordinary Customs inspection of an incoming country-craft. With the boat itself they finished within half an hour. Then they concentrated on me.

I have no wish to go into details of how thoroughly my baggage and person were checked. It only makes me hot with anger, even after all these months. All I had that was dutiable were four tins of cigarettes, and these I declared to the inspector as soon as I got the chance.

The Inspector laughed and looked at his assistants and they all laughed too. He did not say a word to me. Then they began to go through my things.

The way they handled my things, even unfolding each shirt and putting their hands through each single sock, made me furious. But there was little I could do. I protested in vain. Those who have gone through a routine Indian Customs examination will have some idea of what sort of search they make when they have reason to suspect that a passenger is trying to smuggle something into the country.

They took two hours to search my two suitcases and a zipper army-issue valise and they seemed disappointed when they didn't discover anything. Then they opened my tins of cigarettes, every single one, and ripped open several cigarettes in each tin.

At last, I thought, now I can get away. But they hadn't finished. They left a guard on the boat, and throughout the night the guard watched me. I fumed and cursed and threatened all sorts of reprisals, but it was no use.

With the boat itself the Customs officials finished within half an hour. Then they concentrated on me.

The next morning they took me to the main Customs Office and there my baggage was again carefully examined to see if there was any secret compartment or something. They brought out some new-fangled gadget—something like those mine detectors we used to have in the war—presumably to detect the presence of metals. They even ripped open my three pairs of shoes. In the end, when they discovered that I had nothing that I hadn't declared, they let me go, reluctantly and without a word of apology.

THE FIRST THING I did on going to my hotel—even before taking a bath—was to send off an airmail letter to Walter Arnold. I got his reply after I reached Delhi. He confirmed what I had suspected. "Yes," he wrote, "Mathrani tells me he was convinced you were trying to smuggle something. He said he wasn't sure what. I have had quite a row about it with the—. He won't admit it, of course, but you can bet anything he must have tipped off your Customs chaps that you were attempting to smuggle something."

So that was that. Beyond cursing Mathrani, I could do little else. I had visions of meeting him in a dark alley somewhere, all by himself but even the worst hiding I might give him would not make up for what he had done to me. Also, I am not so sure I could have given him a hiding. He is about the same size as I.

It was only a few days ago that I got my chance. Walter Arnold was on his way to England and he stopped in Delhi with me for a day. Within a few minutes of his arrival, we got to talking about Singapore and, inevitably, about Mathrani.

"Oh, he is making a trip to India," Walter said. "Oh one of those posh new Japanese steamers—due to start in a couple of days."

"I almost feel like arranging a one-man reception committee," I said. "How I would love to knock out his teeth."

Walter looked at me and smiled. "Oh, forget the b—," he said. "That worm is not worth bothering about. Nowadays, I cut him dead."

But I didn't forget the b—. Walter caught his plane the next afternoon, and as I was returning from Palam an idea struck me. It gave me a delightful thrill of anticipation.

I stopped at the best-known firm of travel agents in Delhi. "Yes, Sir," the clerk told me. "The KOKIN MARU leaves Singapore tomorrow. It is the new Japanese Line ship. Very modern, very fast." And he shook his head in appreciation.

I WAITED UNTIL I was sure that the ship had actually left Singapore. I didn't want to bungle this thing. Then I sent a cable to Mathrani, although I

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knew that he wouldn't be there. I had given a lot of thought to the wording of the cable. It had to seem both secretive and yet its meaning had to be apparent. This is what I wrote:

SB MATHRANI CHOLON BAR JOHORE ROAD SINGAPORE LALCHAND READY TO PAY TWO GEES PER BAR WILLING TAKE OVER ALL STOCK IN CAL AS SOON AS YOU ARRIVE

I signed the cable: 'Ratanchand'. Then, just to make things doubly sure, I sent a letter to the Superintendent of Customs in Calcutta, telling him that I had reliable information that Mathrani was trying to smuggle gold and that he had already made arrangements with a Delhi merchant to take delivery of the gold in Calcutta itself. I did not send this letter anonymously, or even in a fictitious name. They never take much notice of such letters. I signed a name to this letter but I am not going to tell anyone what name I used.

As I said, all I wanted was to pay back Mathrani in his own coin. I wanted the Customs to receive him with the same ardour with which they had welcomed me when I landed in Calcutta.

I realised I had succeeded far beyond my most vengeful vision.

It was not until I opened my paper yesterday morning that I realised that I had actually succeeded far beyond my most vengeful vision. It was right on the first page.

COCAINE HAUL
IN CALCUTTA

Acting on information, Inspector Paul Raj of the Calcutta Customs searched the baggage of one SB Mathrani, a passenger who arrived from Singapore this morning on the M/V KOKIN MARU. In the false bottom of a cabin trunk and concealed in a number of ornamental Chinese vases, was hidden a large quantity of cocaine, said to be worth more than two lakhs of rupees.

JUST SHOWS YOU doesn't it? I wonder if the Customs people will give me a rake-off! ♦

When you decide the menu and she agrees...

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With Hajmola churan tablets by your side, you can give in to temptation, have a feast, whenever you feel like it! Just two tablets, after meals, will take care of indigestion, heaviness and constipation.

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HAND IN HAND

By Romesh Lamba

WHEN JONTY CALLED and asked me to pose nude for his new sculpture, complimenting my good looks and writer's sensitivity, the proposition took hold of me, pulling me phone in hand to the hallway mirror where I pictured myself marbled and stern. Actually, he said through his shy, strangled laugh which sounded to me like a horse's snort, you'll be posing with a girl, also naked. He knew he had me then and I hung up quickly, stripping already to find where the sensitivity showed through.

Naked, we postured the next day, Jonty's sister and I. I was still in a daze from the shock of meeting Jenny from England of whom I knew only that she was a model, 22, and was close to Jonty, but who stood now bare, without secrets, before me.

"Michael, my sister Jenny. Jen, my best friend Michael—amateur writer and virgin model, the nicest American in Boston. And now, to work."

That was all he said, making me

Romesh Lamba is studying Business Administration at the Wharton Institute, University of Pennsylvania. This is his first short story to be published.

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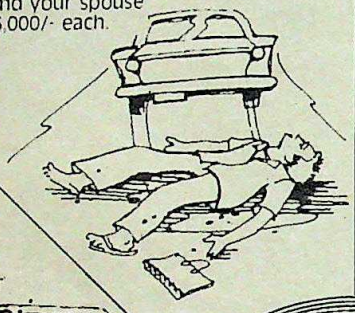

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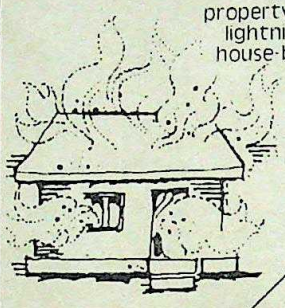

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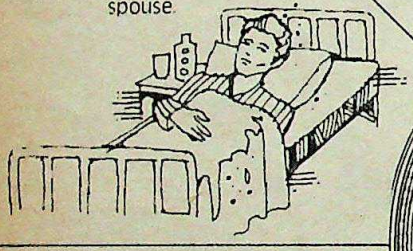

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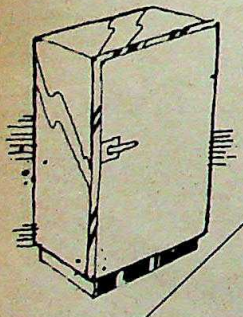

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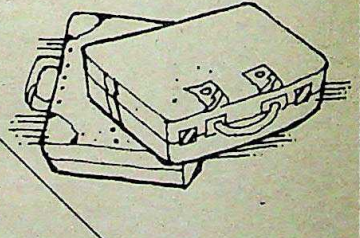

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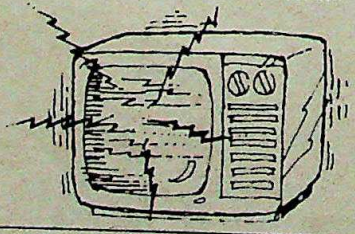

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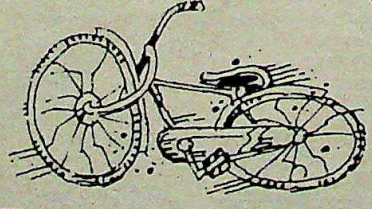

Besides which, you can omit one or two covers which don't apply to you, with a corresponding decrease in the premium.

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New India Assurance

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wonder if I'd ever break through his wall of British reserve. And the surprises behind the wall, a magic room of the unexpected which I was allowed to peek into only for a second before the door was shut again.

We posed on a raised wooden platform a few feet away from where Jonty sat drawing furiously, one of Beethoven's sonatas floating through the room with the air of a spring day with blue skies and not a single cloud. I was in front, half-turned towards Jenny whose hand I held in mine as though I were leading her across Eden. Jenny, who had smiled at me as one would smile at a stranger in a train or a person holding an elevator open as one ran to catch it, even as she unbuttoned her shirt, stepped out of her jeans, slid off her panties.

And watching her, not knowing what to do with myself, for I felt I shouldn't look, yet couldn't turn away, I began undressing myself carefully, slowly. And naked she joked with her brother while I stood at last in just my underpants, looking to see if she was looking, but she wasn't. And then we were up on the stage and I kept on telling myself to stop staring, to be professional, but she was so beautiful, the most beautiful girl I had ever seen in my life, and I wanted more than anything else to ask her out for dinner, but I was too shy. Her nakedness scared me.

Out of the corner of my eye I beheld her nudity. I thought of my cat sleeping at home, I reminded myself to write to my parents, I said again and again, Act your age, Michael, but nothing worked. With growing horror I shifted slightly away from Jenny, thanking God my palms didn't sweat, as if that would have made a difference. If Jonty noticed he showed no sign and I wished this was another place, a bedroom perhaps, but I was appalled at my own desires. Just when I thought the worst was over, Jenny gave my hand a small squeeze and whispered, "It's like Latin, Michael, the more you think about it the harder it grows."

That evening, she told me in the candle-lit restaurant I took her to, that I was like one of those rubber knock-me-down toys that always popped right back up. We spoke of many things, but were both preoccupied, often silent. She lit a cigarette after the table was cleared and laughed a natural, simple laugh. "I like your physique," she said and suddenly I was struck that she hadn't said body but physique; I liked the way she spoke. I answered that I loved her at first sight and as I said the words without preamble, like the way she had taken off her clothes, I realised it was her directness I loved most and I stared into her frank eyes through the cigarette smoke, no longer afraid or uncertain. Without speaking further we hurried to pay the bill and walked swiftly back to the empty studio to which we both had keys.

On to the wooden plateau we stepped and shed our clothes to form a carpet on which we fell, solemn and quiet. Amidst the grey, crinkled blocks of emerging sculptures that inhabited Jonty's studio like a family of ghosts, blessed by starlight falling in luminous rectangles through the skylights, we made slow and silent love, moved by an intensity that scared me. A thousand thoughts rushed through my mind and yet my mind was blank; I felt something, I was moved so deeply, I wanted to hold onto the feeling forever, yet I could not smile or whisper into Jenny's ear. It was as though we had embarked on a voyage whose destination was unknown and from which there was no turning back. And there was also something else in that dark, open room, as if we were ashamed of doing wrong, but that may have just been my imagination.

For three days we posed, arriving early and leaving late, making love before and after on the stage in the same sacred manner. In between, I could now hide my arousal and I held her hand in chaste contentment, stealing looks of complicity like a child. At night we told each other stories of our lives and slept together on my bed, but did not make love until the fourth night when we did not sleep but loved through the night, alternately laughing and crying in the comfort of the bed.

The sculpture was in a glass case with no naked figures in view. Instead Jenny's hand was in mine from the wrists onward carved in smooth white marble and the two joined as one by another pair of hands, like a priest's benediction. . . .

JONTY BANNED US from his studio while he worked on the sculpture, taking back the keys, demanding a patience we could not give; everything seemed to move so quickly those months. The day I called to tell him Jenny and I were getting married he told me he had sold our sculpture to the Fine Arts museum and that we could at last see it. The unveiling was a day before our wedding and we drove, the three of us, to see it.

Jenny and I were apprehensive as we neared the door to the baroque-ceilinged room where the sculpture stood and I told Jenny that maybe we should have come disguised, what if we were recognised? As the people in front drifted away, we both stopped in astonishment. The sculpture was in a glass case and there were no naked figures in view. What we saw, instead, was Jenny's hand in mine from the wrists onward, carved in smooth, white marble, the two joined as one by another pair of hands, like a priest's benediction. The arrangement seemed to flow together with a still beauty. Suddenly Jonty was nowhere in sight as Jenny and I, rendered speechless, looked for him. The sign below the glass read: 'The Matchmaker' by Jonathan Turner. ◆

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Cable TV: Great New Revolution Or Plain Copyright Violation?

By Amrita Shah

THE INFANT CABLE TV industry has become embroiled in a dispute that threatens its very future. The Bombay film industry has taken strong objection to the cablecasting of Hindi movies and is trying to put an end to this. For their part, some cable TV operators insist that the laws of copyright do not apply to them and at least one cable TV executive sees a conspiracy in the film industry's actions.

Cable television or community video as it is more correctly called, was started in Bombay by the Nemula Video Network in June 1982. It enabled residents of the affluent Cuffe Parade area of Bombay to receive (via cable) a regular entertainment programme on payment of a fixed sum.

The company's activities soon expanded to cover other areas of the city and new companies began operating similar schemes. Presently there are nine such companies in Bombay and some in Delhi. The Welcom Group and ITDC have installed cable television in their hotels with the Taj and the Oberoi Groups following suit.

The advantage of cable TV is that it does not involve broadcasting over the air and is therefore, free from government control. But cable operators go a step further and claim that they can legally cablecast foreign television shows and Hindi films without obtaining permission from the producers. Moreover, they also refuse to pay any royalty at all.

Predictably, the film industry, already reeling under competition from video, is furious. Says GP Sippy, producer of blockbusters like *Sholay* and *Shaan*, "They are robbers, they are deriving income from our films without paying us a thing!" According to him, they are clearly violating the Copyright Act.

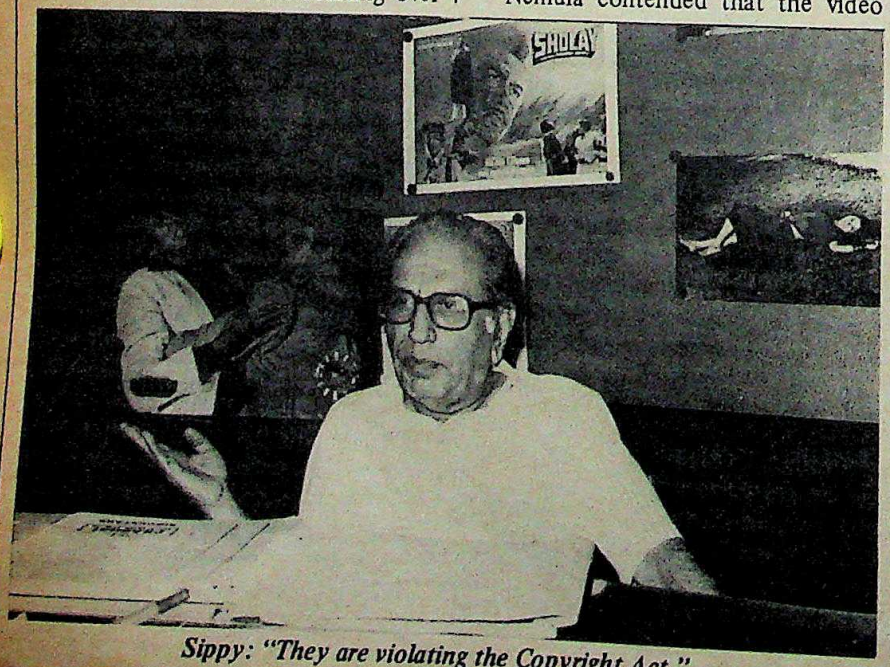
The dispute began when Nemula cablecast *Seeta Aur Geeta*, a Sippy Films Production. The producers filed a suit against Nemula Video Network for exhibiting in public, a cassette that was not meant for exhibition in the Indian market and for which no rights had been given to them.

Nemula contended that the video cassette they had used (issued by Esquire) had 'World Rights' printed on it and nowhere was it stated that India was excluded. Further, the provisions of the Copyright Act clearly did not apply to cablecasting and so Sippy was wrong in claiming that his permission was required. The case has yet to be heard, but Nemula have given an undertaking that they will not cablecast any other Sippy Films productions. SR Nanavati, Director of Nemula, maintains that Esquire had been granted the 'World Rights'. He displays a contract in which the phrase 'excluding India' was added later by hand.

Accusing the film producers of being frightened people, he says, "When the agreement was signed, there was no problem of video in India. Now, realising that video has come to India they have got scared and that is why the vital phrase 'excluding India' was added. There is a conspiracy against me and we are going to prove it is a conspiracy."

SC Hira, Managing Director of Esquire cassette manufacturers tells a different story. "The producer gave me rights only for the overseas market and I agreed. If he does not want me to sell it in India, I told him I will not sell it here." Thus, according to him, India was excluded from the very beginning and there was no question of it being an afterthought. Hira dismisses Nanavati's charge that the cassette was marked 'World Rights' as false.

Nanavati has another argument. He says that if it was legal to sell a video cassette at one place, then the cassette is perfectly legal everywhere. For example, if it is legal to make video



Sippy: "They are violating the Copyright Act."

PHOTOGRAPHS BY AYESHA SONI

Amrita Shah works with Imprint. *She is also the author of* Clashes In The PUCL *elsewhere in the issue.*

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cassettes in Dubai without seeking the producer's permission, then cassettes produced there are legal in India as well, never mind the Copyright Act.

Hira offers another version of this claim: "There is nothing wrong with bringing cassettes from abroad for private viewing. Nowhere is it mentioned that the cassette cannot be taken to India and there is no restriction on this even from the government." If the government thought it was wrong, he argues, 'they would not have allowed the import of such cassettes'.

Shriram Bohra, President of the Indian Motion Picture Producers' Association does not accept this argument. "If it is legal to consume *ganja* in one place," he argues, "does it mean that you can bring it in and consume it in a place where it is illegal?" Bohra seems to concede that private viewing of cassettes bought abroad is legal. He is however emphatic that it is illegal to make money out of such cassettes in India. In any case, private viewing may soon be illegal too. But does cablecasting count as private viewing? Are the owners of cable television who show films without paying royalty infringing the Copyright Act or not?

The question revolves around an interpretation of clauses one and two of Section 52 (K) of the Copyright Act and precedents. The relevant section reads that it would not be an infringement of copyright if a recording is heard either 'at any premises where persons reside as part of the amenities provided exclusively or mainly for residents therein', or 'as part of the activities of a club, society or other organisation which is not established or conducted for profit'.

Cable TV operators argue that they aren't infringing copyright—only providing an amenity.

Mr S Srivastava of Cable Video Corporation insists that they are not infringing copyright rules as they are only providing an amenity for residents—no different from watching video in one's home. Mr Nanavati brandishes a written legal opinion from FS Nariman and Iqbal Chagla that, he says, supports this interpretation. He further maintains that despite clause two which refers to organisations 'not established or conducted for profit', the Act is not really concerned with this. The point, he argues, is whether viewing is private or public—and cable TV only allows for private viewing.

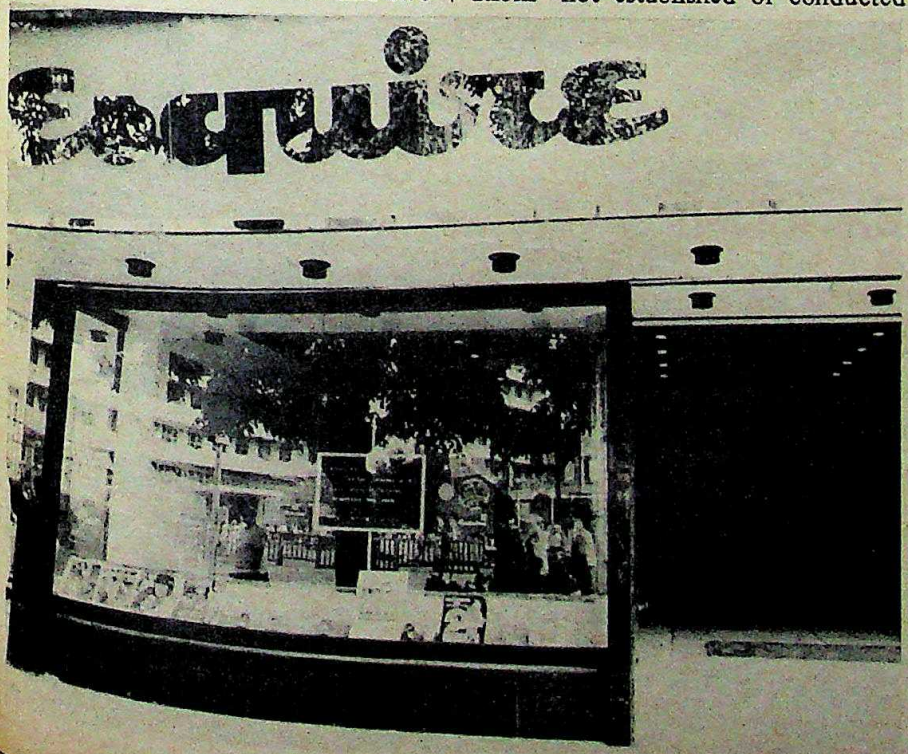
Atul Setalvad, senior advocate and an eminent authority on copyright, however, states emphatically that it is a clear breach of royalty. As a precedent, he gives the example of piped music that is played in hotels as an amenity for guests. Royalty is paid by the hotels in this case. The same logic, Setalvad feels, should apply here since the owners of cable TV systems are reproducing the films for the public and charging for it.

Hira: "Cassette import is legal."

Hira of Esquire echoes this view: "They should pay royalty, it is not for their private viewing or for social work. As they are charging for it, they should pay royalty."

Many arguments are put forth by the cable TV owners. One of them is that cable TV affects only the very rich and this minority cannot diminish film audiences to any appreciable extent. Gulshan Rai, a well-known film distributor and producer asks, "How do you define rich and poor people? In an upper class house with cable TV there may be four families with four servants, sometimes six."

"What do they mean by saying they 'take away' only one per cent of our audience?" demands Sippy. "It is not their property to take what they like.



Esquire: churning out video cassettes.

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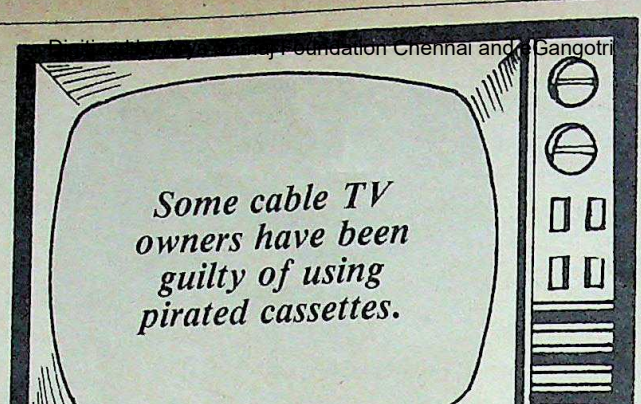
They are taking away our potential customers."

Film producers point out that all over the world, cable TV rights are applied and paid for. For the *Gandhi* film the cable TV rights were reportedly priced at $20 million. If a film is to be cablecast, some compensation must rightfully be paid to the film producer.

What is particularly vexatious for the film industry is the fact that the cable TV organisers make a profit by showing films that have been made by the producers who have run the grave risk of losing their massive investments if the film flops. Besides which, the government loses by way of entertainment tax.

Some cable TV owners have also been guilty of using obviously pirated cassettes. Nanavati insists that Nemula only shows original cassettes and yet *Return Of The Jedi*, a film whose print had been stolen from an English cinema and illegally duplicated, was shown to the residents of Cuffe Parade recently. Nanavati tries to explain this strange phenomenon as a 'symbol of what is happening in the world'. According to him, the producer of the film did not sell rights in America, but he did send the film to Dubai where it was duplicated legally—an explanation which should intrigue George Lucas' lawyers. Says Manjula Nanavati, who is involved in the running of Nemula, "*We* are not in the business of making illegal cassettes." But producers retort that even using stolen or pirated goods for profit is reprehensible.

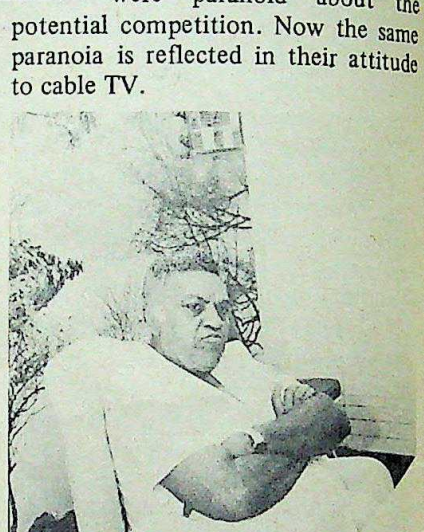


As it is the film industry has yet to decide what its attitude to selling domestic rights to video cassette manufacturers will be. One school of thought believes that video will spell doom for cinema theatres and would like to frustrate all attempts to make feature films available on video.

Others argue that video players are a fact of life and that the industry would be well advised to accept this. They feel that as video cassettes are going to be sold anyhow, the producers might as well try and legitimise the industry and at least get their share of the profits.

The future of cable TV depends, at least partly, on the outcome of this dispute. Should the industry succeed in outlawing all video cassettes of its films in the domestic market, then cable operators will be hard-pressed to explain where their software comes from.

On the other hand, even if the film producers do agree to sell domestic rights to their films to video cassette manufacturers, there is no reason to believe that the industry will change its mind about cable. Before TV came to India, many producers were paranoid about the potential competition. Now the same paranoia is reflected in their attitude to cable TV.

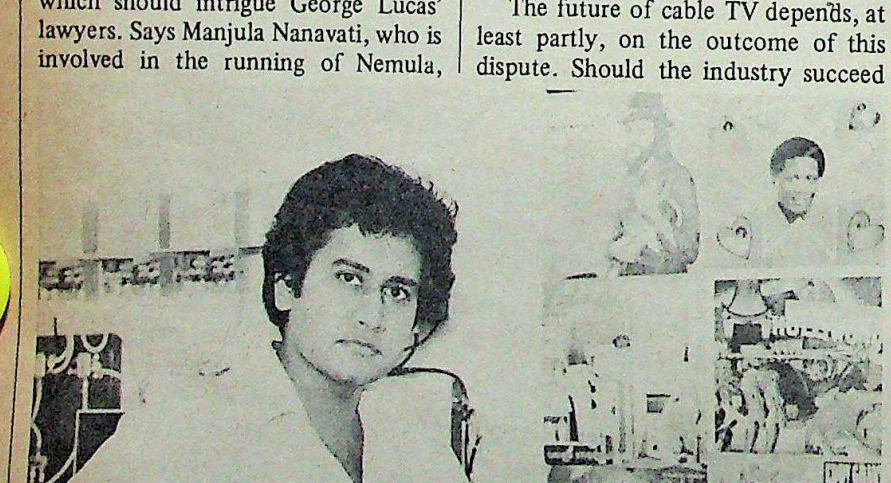


Bohra: leading producers' battalion.

Given the pace of legal proceedings it will take time for the Sippy suit against Nemula to come up for hearing. The cable operators seem confident that they are on strong ground, though the producers are equally vehement.

Meanwhile, there are serious attempts being made by the film industry to have the Copyright Act amended. At the time it was framed, video had not even been thought of and there is a case for framing a new, more relevant Act. Should cable TV catch on, then the government is also likely to legislate to give itself control over it.

If that happens, then the cable TV operators may find that all the arguments they now use to justify their stand have become irrelevant. And if the economics of cable TV are based on non-payment of royalties, then the whole scheme may have to be reconsidered. ♦



Srivastava: "We are not infringing copyright."

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Getting Back At Their Critics

Interviews: Shirin Mehta

WE ALL KNOW THAT CRITICS are a pampered breed, dishing out personal abuse to all and sundry. But can they take it back? In this article a few celebrated artistes give their worst reviewers a slice of their own slander.

KERSY KATRAK

Playwright

I HAVE REALLY NOTHING to say about critics by and large. But if you want to know about the most recent slanderous review that I have received it was Nirmal Goswami's critique of my play *Nightbirds*. Now *that* is what I call irresponsible criticism because it is self-indulgent. I don't know if you've read the piece but it is about Spinoza (who that is I myself don't know)—spreading its wings and trying to take off and never getting off the ground. . . . there is a sort of crash landing. Now, even assuming that Spinoza is the author and that the critic means to say the play does not take off the ground and falls flat on its face, that is only a one-line criticism. . . I mean there is nothing—nothing—about the play, the actors, the production, the props—anything. Instead you have a description, couched in what Goswami feels is philosophical jargon, of a plane getting off the ground and then crashing. What sort of criticism is that? You have used my play as a vehicle by means of which you can write—rubbish!

You are at liberty to hate the play thoroughly, hate the actors' faces, hate the way in which it is written but you have to say something about it. . . . There *is* something of a sneer about the fact that it was performed in a place like Studio 29. Why? What does the place in which it is presented have to do with the intrinsic value of the play?

I still don't know what Goswami was hoping to achieve by the review. There have been many people who have met me and talked about it and they didn't understand it either. Very often people ask me, "It was a very good review, wasn't it?" Not only has Goswami failed in his task as a critic, he has also failed to convince people that it was a bad play. And as far as I'm concerned the fact that he is Bengali is the failing point. I mean Goswami writes as a Bengali *thinks*

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and he writes in the English medium as if it were Bengali. We all know that Bengali is very different from English—it is a very emotional language with a lot more of lilting strains in it.

My poems have often been reviewed favourably and unfavourably, badly and not badly but I have yet to come across a review that made no sense. I mean, no matter what people like Adil Jussawalla and Saleem Peeradina have to say about my poems at least they always write sense.

I have often considered that MV Mathews (he used to be a reviewer for the *Times of India*) reviews prejudicially in the extreme. Everyone knows for a fact that if Mathews likes you he is bound to find your stuff worth reading and praising and that if he doesn't like you he'll give you a kick on the ass. Of course, needless to say he didn't like me at all: we've had several fights and very many hard words. But whatever his relationship with the author, it should not matter to his reviews.

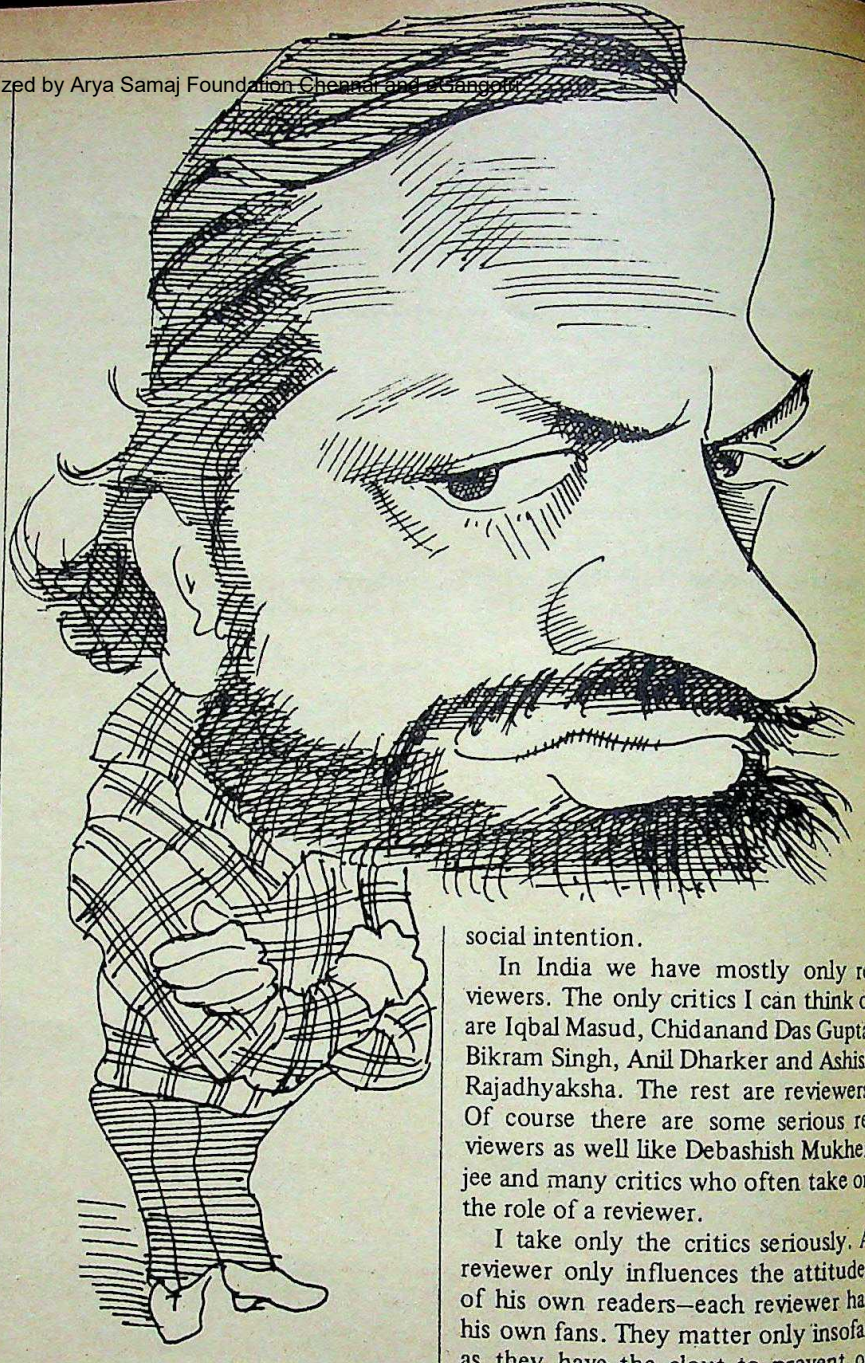
Bias, that is to say viewpoint, or even prejudice (which in effect means suspended judgement—I look at it that way) that's okay. But personal prejudice based on body chemistry or personal bias or the fact that you don't like the person's face *that* should not be the role of the critic.

Which is not to say that I would disregard an unfavourable review just because it is unfavourable. Whatever it is it has to be cogently argued. For a start, dammit, it has to at least make sense. There have been many reviews which are very angry, personal, and to that extent cruel. One learns to take them for what they are worth. To say that this is all personal crap, cut it out. After which if the piece is well argued and you have aspirations to be a better writer you look at the criticism and use it.

SHYAM BENEGAL

Film Director

YOU HAVE TO FIRST DIFFERENtiate between a reviewer and a critic. The reviewer takes on himself the job of interpreting and evaluating a film to the readers of his publication. Now in India a majority of those who see films do not read reviews in the English press—the upper crust you have restricted yourself to. So the question arises: what audience does the reviewer relate to in India?



Abroad, the relationship between a reviewer or a critic and his audience is very clear. For example, a critic for the *Guardian* knows the people who read his paper, the people who are going to see the film he is talking about. In India such a relationship between English language reviewers and the audience of our films is not so clear.

Next we come to the critics. The critic's function, unlike a reviewer's is to set out a set of criteria to evaluate a given film, not necessarily aimed at only the audience for his own publication. A critic's job is more serious—he has to judge a work against a given measure to evaluate its aesthetic and social intention.

In India we have mostly only reviewers. The only critics I can think of are Iqbal Masud, Chidanand Das Gupta, Bikram Singh, Anil Dharker and Ashish Rajadhyaksha. The rest are reviewers. Of course there are some serious reviewers as well like Debashish Mukherjee and many critics who often take on the role of a reviewer.

I take only the critics seriously. A reviewer only influences the attitudes of his own readers—each reviewer has his own fans. They matter only insofar as they have the clout to prevent or encourage their readers from seeing a film.

But I do not consider this a fully satisfying response. A critic must be a bouncing board for the artist, he has to respond to the work in its totality not just to its photography or music etc. I think a reviewer like Khalid Mohammed does not even read my film. I think he takes my film as a joke and his reviews are only clever copy. Such a negative response is of no use, though it might upset me temporarily.

A good critic should set out the parameters for his criticism, his concepts of a good film, the aesthetic and social criteria he is using. I find our reviewers have no consistent parameters, they keep shifting their positions. One of the best pieces of criticism I have

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read was by a Calcutta economist who judged my films on a political, social and aesthetic level. His parameters were so precise that they actually helped clear a lot of cobwebs in my mind.

Of course criticism does not influence me as a filmmaker because the work of an artist is purely dependent on his creative urge. But a critic can identify the course of an artist's development.

I know I have often been attacked by some reviewers who say my films are too slick. This is the opinion of only those few reviewers who know of my background in advertising. No one else has observed it. Obviously they are biased. A film and its maker's intentions should be judged in the film itself exclusively, not on the filmmaker's background or his public utterances. And what's wrong with craftsmanship anyway?

Public reaction to my films is also an important kind of criticism because if a film flops it means my next effort will be more of an uphill task. I have often been misquoted as simplistically saying that a commercial equation should be made in filmmaking. My point is not that. I think a commercial equation *is* made in filmmaking, necessarily.

I think the art of film criticism has not yet had the opportunity to develop because there are as yet no serious film magazines like *Sight And Sound.*

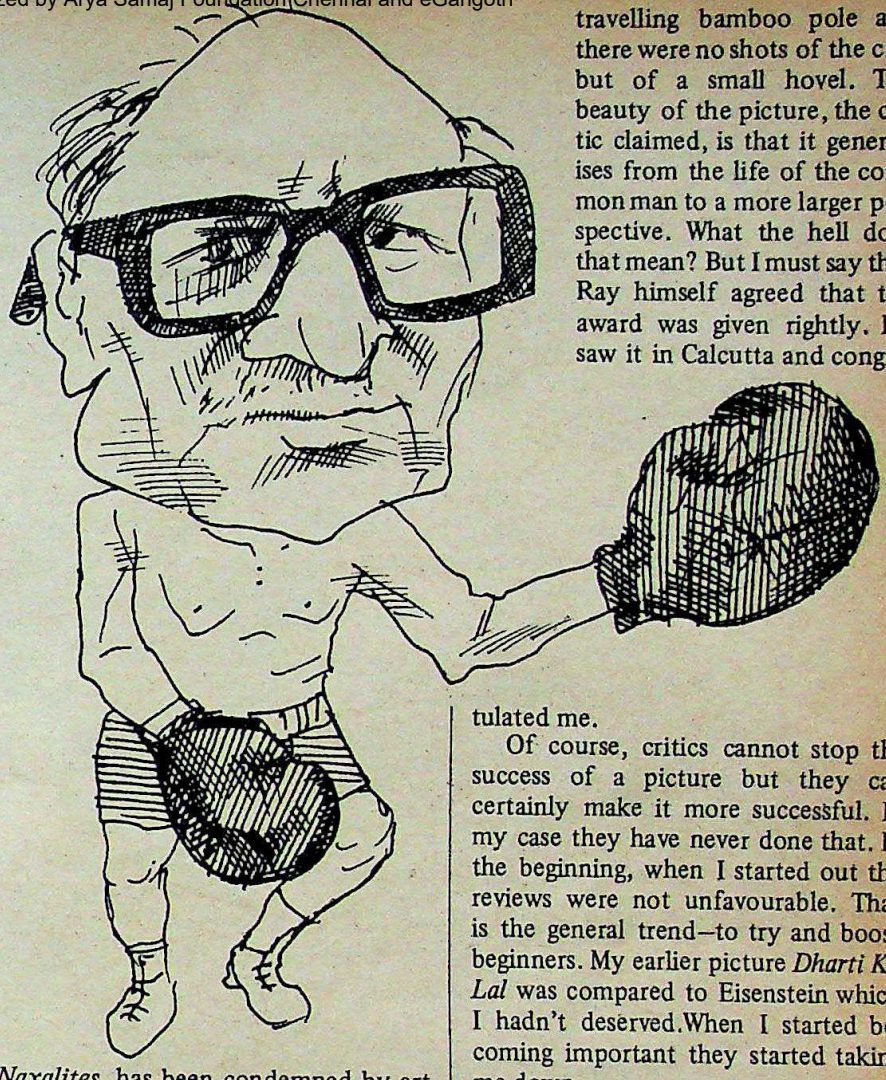
KA ABBAS

Film Director and Writer

WHAT DO I THINK OF CRITICS? I think that they are most self-opinionated, ignorant of the details of production and generally eager to impress people with their intelligence rather than discuss the merits of the film. This I firmly believe to be true of the majority of them.

I'll give you an example of what I mean. You see, I had written a book of my travels abroad and all that I had done or encountered there. One critic wrote a review saying that from the way Abbas writes, he does not seem to have been abroad at all. Then why should I write a book on my travels abroad? And on what basis has he decided that I had not been abroad?

Another example. My latest film, *Naxalites*, has been condemned by art and culture-*wallahs* (call them culture vultures) and commercialists. On the one hand I have been accused of being a propagandist; on the other hand critics who have never met Naxalites talk of sentimentality and that I have therefore been unfair to the Naxalite cause. The normal trend nowadays seems to be that the picture does not come up to *their* expectations. What does that mean? Why should they see any film with preconceived expectations?



In all cases I have found that their expectations are very high, in fact the sky is the limit. Then when they feel that it did not live up to what they thought it would be they condemn it for falling flat on its face.

In the case of *Shehar aur Sapna*, people criticised the picture for being namby-pamby and sentimental nonsense. A Delhi critic wrote that this picture doesn't deserve the President's award and that it should have gone to Ray. When he was asked why, he said because it (Ray's film) was called *Mahanagar*. There was a shot of a travelling bamboo pole and there were no shots of the city but of a small hovel. The beauty of the picture, the critic claimed, is that it generalises from the life of the common man to a more larger perspective. What the hell does that mean? But I must say that Ray himself agreed that the award was given rightly. He saw it in Calcutta and congratulated me.

Of course, critics cannot stop the success of a picture but they can certainly make it more successful. In my case they have never done that. In the beginning, when I started out the reviews were not unfavourable. That is the general trend—to try and boost beginners. My earlier picture *Dharti Ke Lal* was compared to Eisenstein which I hadn't deserved.When I started becoming important they started taking me down.

If I were to take what they said to heart I would never do anything. The criticism for my books also followed the same pattern.

I can give you the instance of a critic who made up his mind before he saw my picture. He said that several Naxalites had been killed by the Calcutta police and now a Bombay producer is going to kill them. A Bombay producer? What do they mean by that? Don't they know my name? Why should they always think that they are more important? Do you know that I waited ten years to make the Naxalite movie? I waited for years thinking that either Ray or Mrinal Sen will do something about the theme. But when they didn't come up with anything I went ahead and did it.

My Naxalite film was also criticised for not being properly researched. I spent what I felt was the longest time to research the movie. I lived with the Naxalites, harboured them in my house for sometime, read up all the books that I could on the subject and went to all the places where they are in the

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majority. So how can they say that I have not researched it?

Bobby they said sounded unrealistic, that it was a comedown for Abbas to have made such a film. I must admit that in the case of *Bobby*, Raj Kapoor did take out the realism in it. Like a fisherwoman's daughter wearing a bikini—who has heard of that? But on the whole I think that my theme was there, that there should be no bar on the rich marrying the poor. But the problem is that the critics gave it such a bad review—those very things they would have overlooked if it had been in any other movie.

There is no balanced criticism in this country—they either raise you sky high or they dump you in the gutter. I used to respect the criticism of NK Ghosh (ABP critic) and in Bombay two Gujaratis: Bakulesh and Geetuvai. Their criticism was at least well-balanced.

Like the art and culture-*wallahs* the critics have made a clique. They praise the small picture-*wallahs* and put down the others; they also prefer the non-communication directors like Mani Kaul.

DOM MORAES

Writer and Poet

THE POINT OF CRITICISM IS THAT it is often so invalid. Someone in India—I forget who—once said that I was a world class talent gone down the drain At the same time Stephen Spender and Jeffrey Hill—the publishers of my poetry book in London—said that the poems I had sent in to them were excellent, really top class. They didn't think I had written so well in years.

Oh I know that there are many people who have said that I'm finished as a writer, that the best things I've written were years back. But that's all so much of nonsense.

Generally I don't react to what the critics have to say about me. If someone I like writes in to say that they have found something wrong with it then I take it to heart. You acquire friends and enemies and either way they are going to write what they feel about you as a person. Taking such criticism to heart is absolutely pointless. I mean some idiot reviewer who I don't know at all blasts me doesn't make much difference; and if someone that I know to be a true admirer of mine says it's a lovely book or poem I know how much of that should be taken seriously! In either case I don't care a damn.

I suppose the only time a review cut me to the quick was when the London *Sunday Times* reviewed my book on Mrs Gandhi and said that I was a courtier of Mrs Gandhi. Now I resented that. When I started the book it was 1977 and she was down and out and I finished it at a time when she was still not in power. It was banned at the time because of the elections. The claim that I was praising her or flattering her for something was really so unjustified.

It does not mean that I do not take criticism to heart. In fact the only people who I listen to are the people that I really admire. Like in the old days WH Auden used to tell me what he thought was wrong with my poetry, if a line worked or not. It was left to me to correct it.

But in the final analysis none of this matters. If you think, like I do, that some of your work is going to live on after you, then all this is of no consequence.

ADI MARZBAN

Theatre Director

ONE OF THE SEVEREST CRITI-cisms that has been levelled against me is that I produce English plays. But I must say in my defence that there are no good translations available in India. Pardon my saying so, but even Mr Tendulkar's plays are not really im-

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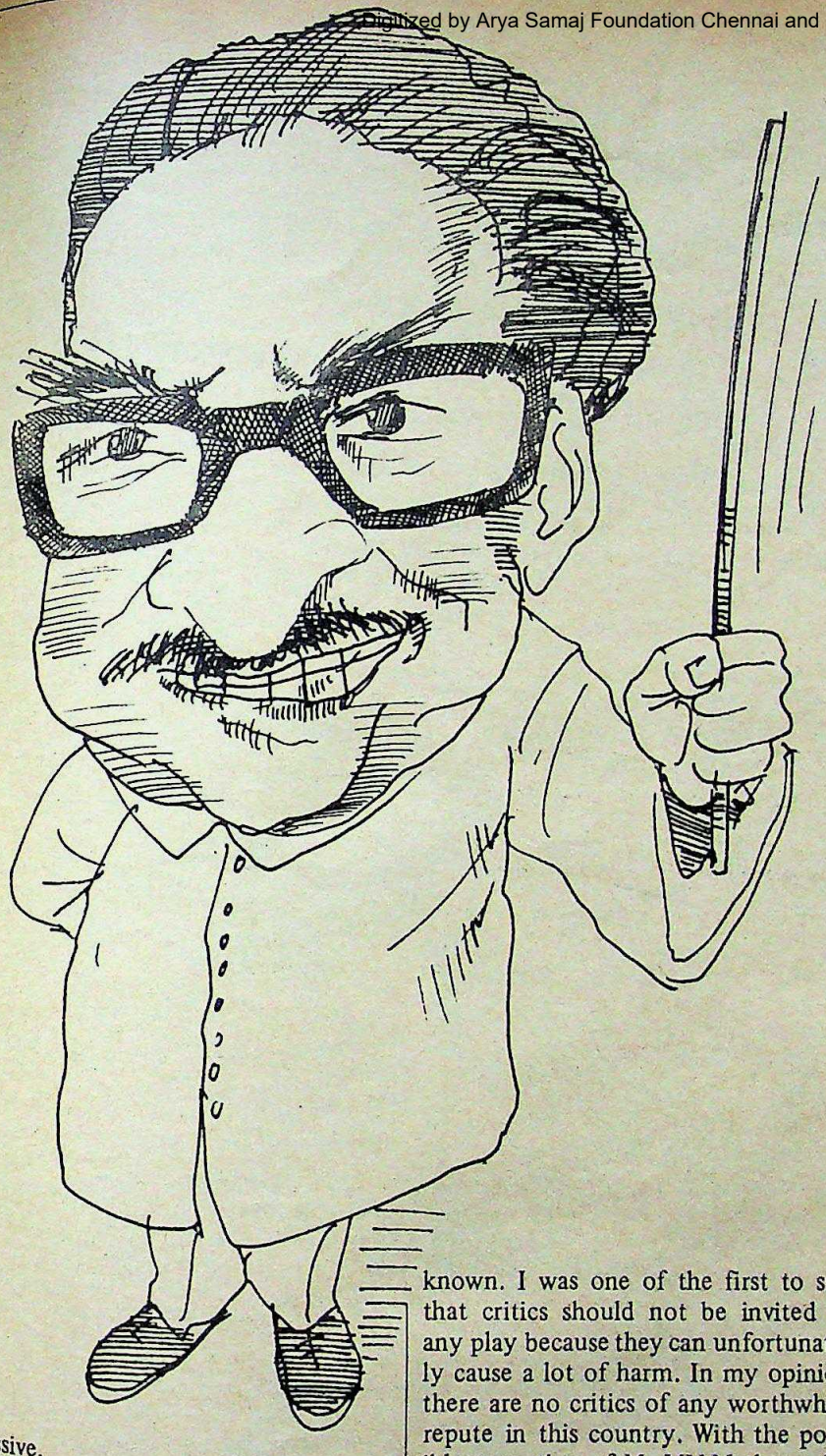

pressive.

You see I really don't know where to start. This year I will be producing my 55th full-length play at the Parsi New Year. My very first play—*Chaye Ame Zarathosti*—was very severely criticised because I, in my naivety dared to poke fun at the Parsi community as I saw it then. (That was way back in the early '40s.) If I don't like what you say then I find fault with you all over: I say that you are stunted, handicapped, that you don't write, that there is nothing good about you. . . . Unfortunately that's the way criticism works.

My views on critics are very well-known. I was one of the first to say that critics should not be invited to any play because they can unfortunately cause a lot of harm. In my opinion there are no critics of any worthwhile repute in this country. With the possible exception of Mr MV Mathews. He was a man who had his idiosyncracies. But on the whole he was knowledgeable. And that is what counts in the final run.

Today the majority of the people are horribly influenced by the critics. A schoolboy or a schoolgirl goes and reviews Yehudi Menuhin's concert recital and says that it was all rubbish. If they can even keep five people away from the concert it is a crying shame. Where are the critics of any calibre?

The rule of my life has been that I should not review any plays because I am in the field myself. Maybe the day I retire (that may be a few years from now) I will start reviewing and criticising plays. Right now, though I am eminently qualified to judge, I never do so.

There are, according to me, two kinds of critics—the name-droppers and the ones who feel that everything should have a purpose. The name-droppers will start off a review with a long aside on how they were in London and watched the same production which was acted by Laurence Olivier. The fact that it has no relevance to the reader and to the play that they are reviewing doesn't matter. The people who think that all things should have a purpose are the ones who start off the review with soul-searching questions on some philosophical point that has no bearing to the play itself. I am firmly of the conviction that art does not have to have a purpose. When a bird sits on a telephone wire and sings it does not plan to change the world. To me, it just sings. And that is what art is all about.

Sometime back I had made a statement in the press (which I stand by till today) that give me a stone and I will teach it how to act. By that I meant that I can teach anyone the technique of acting, the rudiments which he/she can use. Of course, the sensitivity that the actor can bring to the role, the way he can immerse himself in the character are all to be added on. Kersy Katrak read this statement in the press and said what an ego has this Mr Adi Marzban to make such a statement. What I didn't say even then was that I could teach a stone to act but not Mr Katrak.

My very firm belief is that the tribe of critics should be demolished. Just like the dog has to be de-ticked from time to time the profession of theatre has to de-liced of these pests.

DEV ANAND

Film Actor and Director

I ENJOY READING AN INTELLIgent review of a film. When a critic or a reviewer has a lot of knowledge about cinema, it is a pleasure to read him.

Sadly, I don't get this pleasure often. In India, there are very few good film critics. Most of the time they just want to show off their

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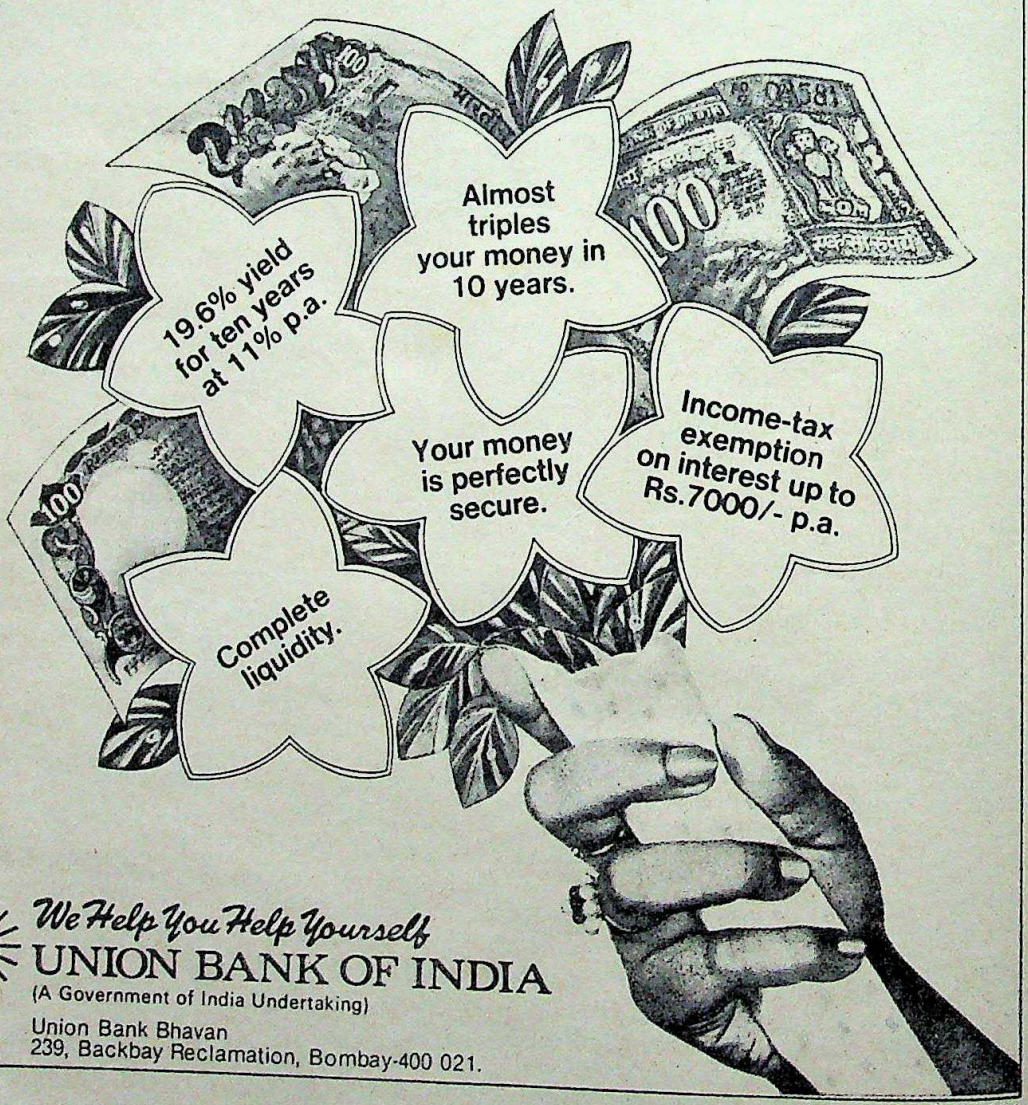

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language and write funny things. They get carried away with their prose.

And after all, what do they know about our cinema? Do they appreciate that we are making films to entertain poor people, the majority of whom are illiterate? We have to make a certain kind of film for this audience.

But the critics either don't realise this or they deliberately ignore it. I am fed up of reading about art cinema which is supposed to be very good while what we do is fit only for making fun of. Let's stop talking about art and non-art cinema! A film is either good or bad. Whether it is expensive or inexpensive is not the point.

These people have their noses stuck in the air, they are so full of themselves that they come and write all sorts of nonsense based on their preconceived notions.

Let's be honest. Let's be sensible. What kind of films are we making? What criteria should be applied? What is the yardstick? A filmmaker struggles to achieve a certain effect. Let's judge him on how well he achieves this. Let's stop criticising him for not making an art film—this was not what he wanted to produce in the first place.

I don't care about most critics. I don't get hurt by what they say. Not only are they looking for the wrong things but they also don't always make intelligent remarks. You read a review; they've emphasised the photography, when it was the performance that was good. Or they've praised something that everyone knows was bad. They just show off. Because they can crack jokes, they feel they've become cinema experts.

But really, this is a great pity. Filmmaking is a creative medium. We need feedback. We need criticism. We need our work to be assessed. Whenever I read a good constructive review, I feel like bursting into applause. Nobody respects a knowledgeable critic more than I do. And, there are some good critics in this country. I don't want to mention any names, but some people do know what cinema is about and write reviews that are constructive and intelligent.

Such critics unfortunately are in the minority. The majority of people tend to know nothing of cinema. When they are told to review a Hindi film, they treat it as an opportunity to crack jokes and exhibit their writing styles. They know nothing, they say nothing of any relevance and what is worse, they learn nothing from their experience.

In a country where standards of journalism have become so high, where we produce magazines and newspapers that are of world class, it is a great gap that we do not have a reviewing tradition that is of a similarly high standard.

What we need are proper film reviewers who have studied the medium and have acquainted themselves with the needs and demands of our cinema. Then directors like myself will get the pleasure of reading reviews that tell us where we have gone wrong and what we can do better. ◆

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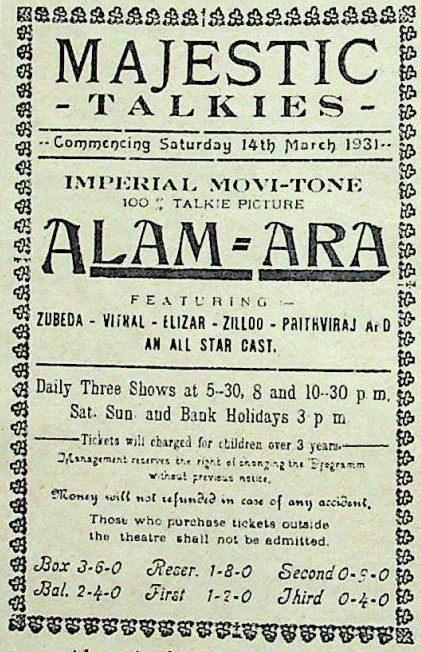
Silent Cinema's Forgotten Stars

By Ketaki Sheth

HOTEL WELCOME IS A welcome change from its neighbouring Hotel London, New York, Paris, Punjab and Madras counterparts in Bombay's crowded Frere Road section. Its neon-lit name sign stands out quite prominently, distinguishing it from the adjacent crumbling structures with their cosmopolitan names. You alight the dimly-lit stairway, past the reception room of the hotel and climb three more flights of creaky, cement-splattered, paper-littered steps which seems to be a nesting ground for cooing pigeons. A dark passage leads to the left and if you look hard enough, a musty name-plate reads, 'Mubarak Merchant'. Merchant, 74, once-upon-a-time hero of the silent film era, three-time Akbar (*Tansen, Anarkali, Rana Pratap*) and part-time shikari ("In my lifetime I have shot 23 panthers, nine tigers, one bison and six bears") is today an isolated shadow hero with only his achievements and memories as companions.

An Afghan by birth, Merchant an orphan, was brought up by the Namden Iranis, a Bombay-based Parsi family, whose only visible legacy in the artiste's home is a polished rosewood desk and chair. We sit on a faded sofa surrounded by dusty bookshelves on top of which lies a silver-framed plaque presented to the artiste by Mrs Gandhi in 1981 commemorating 50 years of Indian talkies. "But I'm especially proud of this," says Merchant, pointing to a statue fashioned after the Oscar trophy, awarded for an outstanding performance by an Indian actor or actress. "It was introduced for only two years and withdrawn shortly after. I was the first and last to receive it for my performance in *Renuka*."

Flipping through his albums, images of Merchant the actor and Merchant the boxer, ballroom dancer, cricketer and shikari all come alive as the narrator recounts each experience. "I used to be so scared of tigers. During the shooting of *Noor Jehan* in Udaipur, a supposedly tame tiger tore the dummy to shreds and I was petrified. I was then 22 and wanting to look brave. So when I was asked 'are you frightened?', I said, 'no, no,' breaking out in cold sweat."


MAJESTIC
- TALKIES -
--Commencing Saturday 14th March 1931--
IMPERIAL MOVI-TONE
100 % TALKIE PICTURE
ALAM-ARA
FEATURING :—
ZUBEDA - WIRAL - ELIZAR - ZILLOO - PRITHVIRAJ AND
AN ALL STAR CAST.
Daily Three Shows at 5-30, 8 and 10-30 p m.
Sat. Sun and Bank Holidays 3 p m
Tickets will charged for children over 3 years.
Management reserves the right of changing the Programm without previous notice.
Money will not refunded in case of any accident.
Those who purchase tickets outside the theatre shall not be admitted.
Box 3-6-0 Reser. 1-8-0 Second 0-9-0
Bal. 2-4-0 First 1-2-0 Third 0-4-0

Alam-Ara's *original poster.*

Retired a long time from films ("Don't ask me dates, that's my biggest failing"), Merchant has been writing scripts in recent years, "but they're not selling. The producers don't want them. They say it's too much like a western script." The two scripts he mentions revolve around 'real-life experiences'. One is based on the problems of sharecroppers and the second on yellow journalism. The latter is particularly important to Merchant: "It's about a series of scurrilous articles written by a film journalist which completely ruined the life of an actress known personally to me. Besides her very true-to-life experience, my script is set in editing and mixing rooms and in laboratories and studios, so that it's a film both about an actress and the whole process of filmmaking."

Living above Hotel Welcome since 1918, all through his life of 70 films spanning 41 years, Merchant now finds living alone extremely difficult. His stipend of Rs 450 per month from the Cine Artistes Association, which, ironically, he started in his salad days, barely sees him through his everyday needs and medical expenses (Merchant suffers from vertigo, heart disease and peripheral neuritis and often has to climb the five storeys of his building). "I hope the end comes soon. I'm finding life unbearable at 74." For the one-time waltzer, boxer, actor, hunter, life seems to clock by in slow measured ticks as he shuffles hesitantly to shut the door.

* * *

Zubeida, 72, now referred to as Begum Zubeida after her marriage at 21 to the former Raja of Dhanrajgir, started her career at 12 in 1923. Born into a wealthy nawabi family of Hyderabad, Zubeida's entry into silent films was influenced, to a large extent, by her screen sister, Sultana and her stage actress mother Begum Fatma. It was her mother who started the Victoria Fatma Film Co for whom Zubeida did seven of her total of 60 films.

Now that she is an invalid (her gangrene-infected leg had to be amputated two years ago), Zubeida's room resembles a hospital with Girija her ayah for companionship, scores of

Ketaki Sheth is on the staff of Imprint. *Her photo-feature* Mother And Child *appeared in the July issue.*

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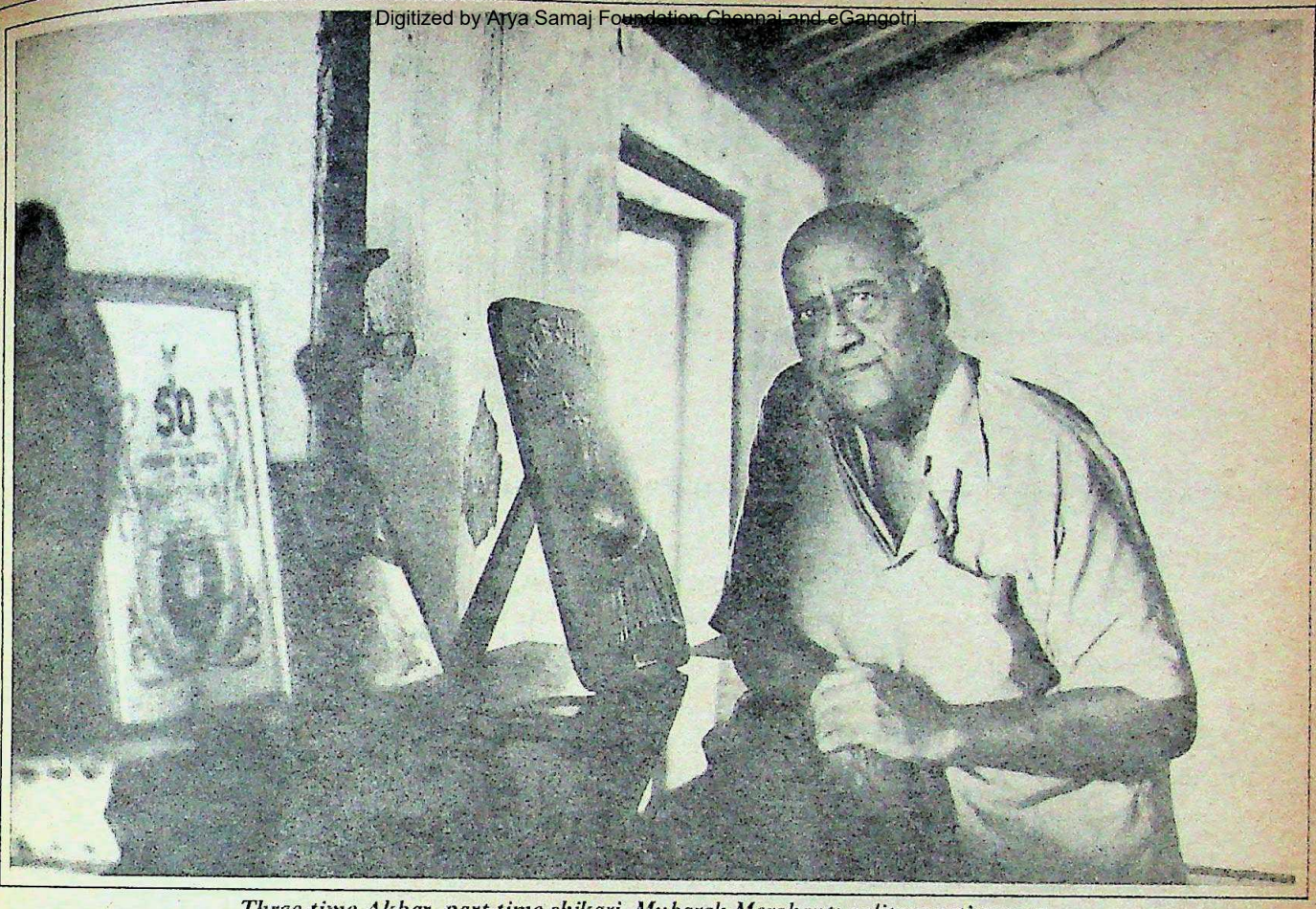
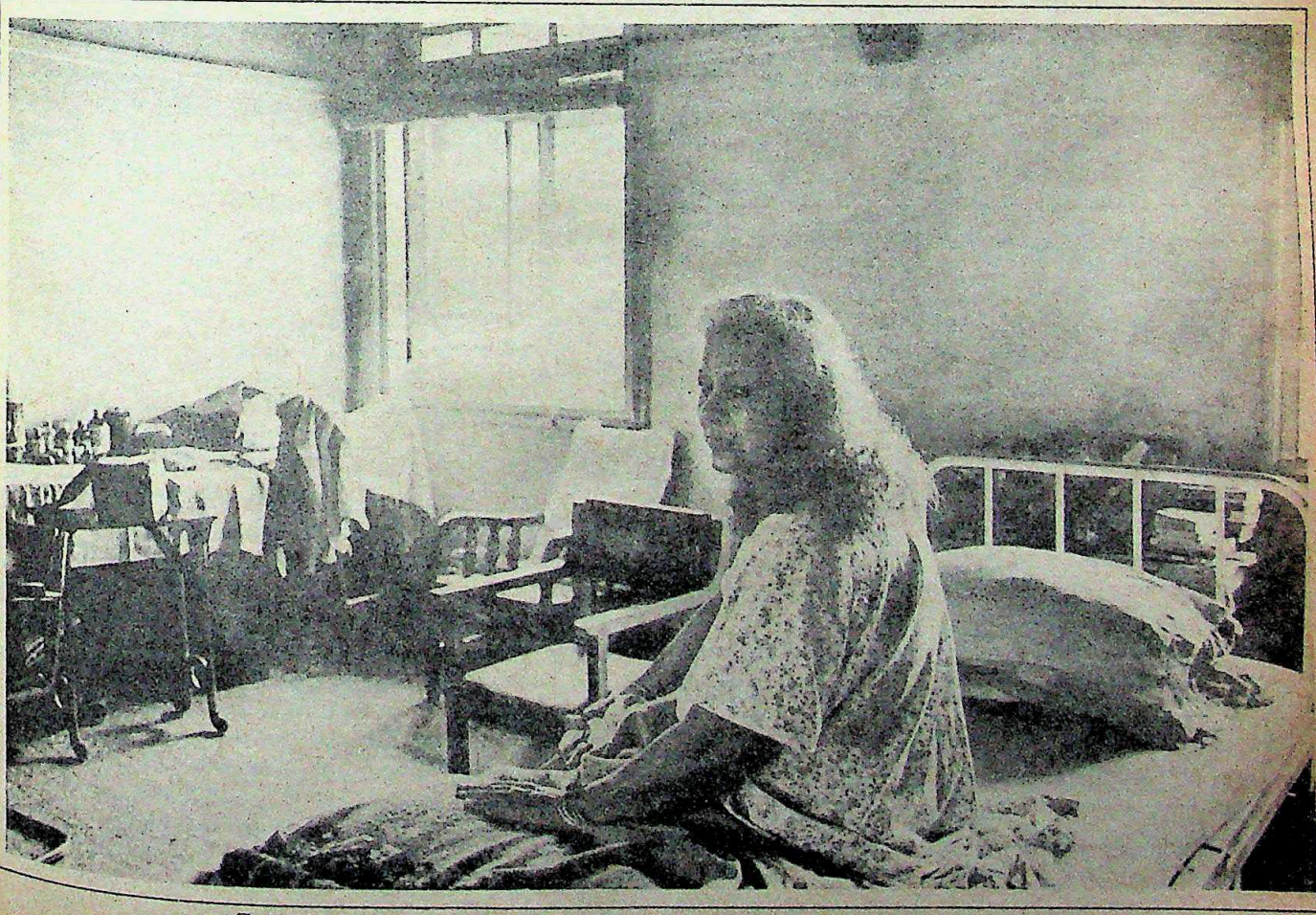


Three-time Akbar, part-time shikari, Mubarak Merchant: solitary retirement.



Zubeida, heroine of the first Indian talkie: now out of the movie mainstream.

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photographs and daguerreotypes as memories and heaps of Mills and Boon and Nick Carter novels as pastimes. Her face still retains the dignity and sophistication that she has always been remembered for (a press clipping of the '40s concludes: 'Moreover, Zubeida is a brilliant and witty conversationalist'). One of the mementos she is most proud of, placed carefully between an exquisite sepia-shaded still of her mother and a garlanded picture of Sai Baba, is an enlargement of a very glamorous Zubeida with Mrs Gandhi in 1981, when both she and Mubarak Merchant were paid tribute to. It was a few months after my amputation. The doctor was hesitant. I was determined to go and I went in my wheelchair."

Zubeida was the heroine of the first Hindi talkie, *Alam Ara* (see poster) produced by the late Khan Bahadur Ardeshir Irani, owner of the oldest existing studio in Bombay which is today manned by his son, Shapurji Irani. Popularly known as Jyoti Studios, the once Imperial Film Company changed its name after partition, "as the imperial days were gone" reminisces Shapurji Irani. The premiere of *Alam Ara* was a grand occasion. It took place at Majestic theatre in Bombay in 1931 and the chief guest was the Governor of Bombay, Roger Lumley. "There was a red carpet, police *bandobast*. . . . great style," recalls Irani Jr.

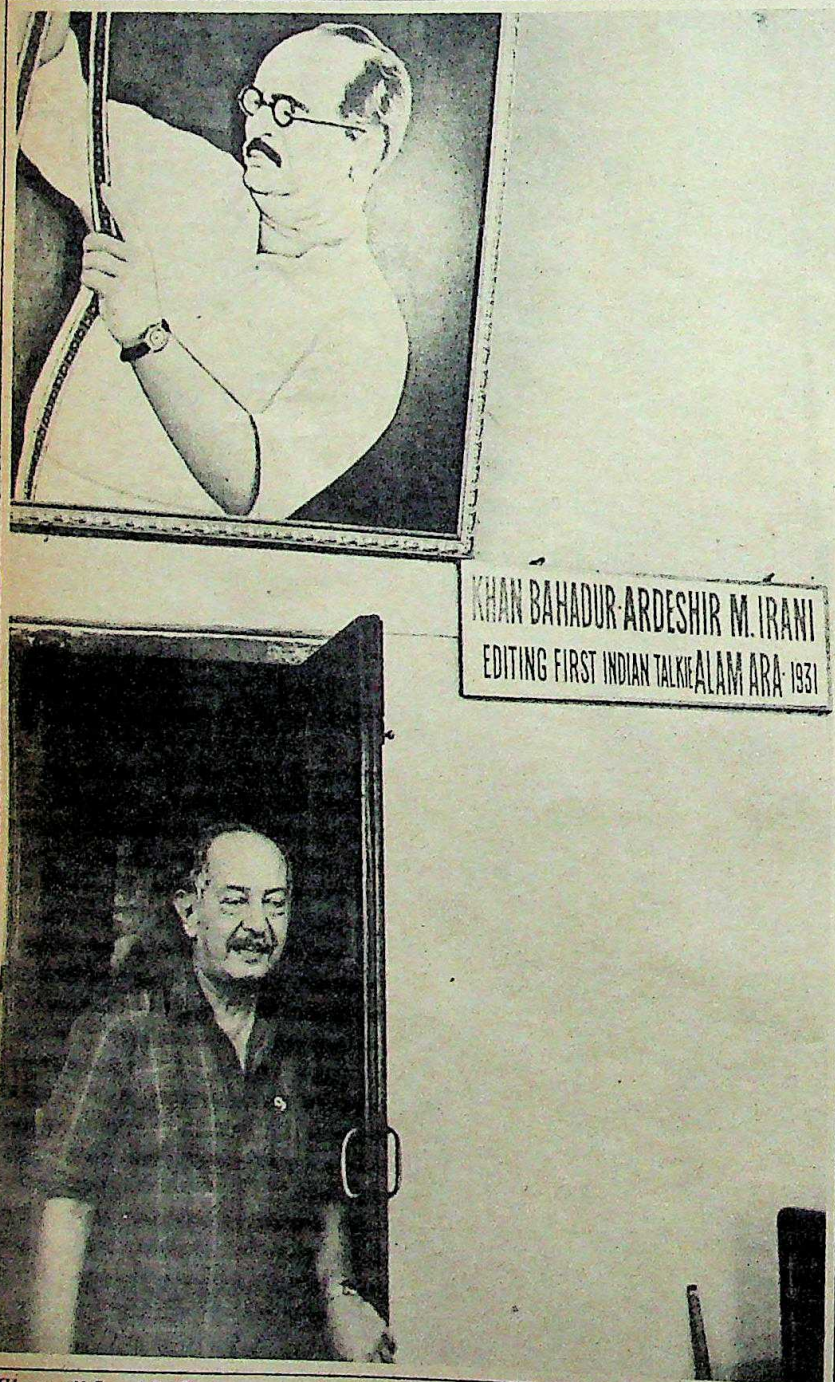
"He was the father of the talkie and of the first film colour process," explains Shapurji Irani. The first colour laboratory was set up by the late Ardeshir Irani in India in the early '30s at a heavy cost and the first colour film to be produced was *Kisan Kanya* in 1937, followed by the fabled *Mother India*. "My father called an expert from Hollywood, one Mr Wolfe. He paid his passage, put him up at the Taj and learnt the colour process technique in three weeks," recalls Irani Jr who was barely out of school when his father had introduced both sound and colour into the silent movie world.

* * *

One of the 'celebrities' of the '30s who attended the premiere of *Alam Ara* was Gauhar K Mamajiwala, a dusky beauty with expressive eyes. Popularly known as 'glorious Goharbai', the actress, now 74, was a contemporary of *Alam Ara* heroine Zubeida as well as her close personal friend. Recalling the occasion of the premiere, Goharbai says: "We were mobbed by the crowd. We used to hide or slip out early on such occasions. But the crowds were never obscene or unruly, they were merely star-gazers."

Goharbai shot into fame and frame in 1925 with *Fortune And The Fools* when she was in her late teens for the Kohinoor Film Company, with Homi Master as her director. Since then, she has to her credit 20 silent films and 20 talkies including her memorable performance in *Achoot* opposite Motilal and her favourite role in *Barrister's Wife* directed by Chandulal Shah. *Barrister's Wife*, a talkie, revolves around the life of a young woman compelled to break her relationship with someone of her choice to marry an older barrister because of parental pressure. In the film, Goharbai plays both the barrister's wife as well as their young daughter. According to one report, Chandulal Shah sent 3,000 telegrams to promote the film. The telegrams read: "Come meet Miss Gohar in *Barrister's Wife*." Reflecting on her 15 successful years as an actress, Goharbai muses, "I was singularly lucky in always being the heroine."

At the time when few women dominated the film industry and fewer



Shapurji Irani before a portrait of his father, movie pioneer, Ardeshir Irani.

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'Glorious' Goharbai with a '30s portrait of herself from Achoot.

still went into production and finance, Goharbai, together with her by then steady companion, director Chandulal Shah, formed a film company. Ranjit Films, still in existence today, has four floors with studios and equipment and at one time employed 400 personnel and produced 130 features under Chandulal Shah's stewardship, including more than 60 money-spinners. The company is today no longer run by Goharbai.

Through their association, Goharbai and Chandulal Shah broke a lot of taboos in the days when heroines were only projected as good, kind, virtuous and dutiful wives. In *Guna Sundari* (English title: *Why Husbands Go Astray*), the story revolves around the dilemma of the dutiful wife, burdened by household problems. At night she takes these problems to the bedroom. The husband, with his own crop of work frustrations, doesn't want his problems multiplied. So he turns to a dancing girl. The film's message hits hard and clear at a time when heroines were only the *sati Savitri* type: "Don't only be a dutiful wife. Be a companion too." A long and steady professional and personal relationship between the two lasted till 1975 when Chandulal Shah died.

Unlike her contemporaries who in a way still live in the memory of the days when the cameras cranked and the artistes performed; when earning Rs 5,000 per month slotted you above the Governor; when discipline was the name of the game and a movie took about a month to complete—Goharbai, while upholding these 'virtues' has learnt to accept the changing attitudes and tastes of both the audience and the artistes of the '80s. "The whole nation has changed, not just the film industry. . . . . you can't expect people to stay the same—the mentality of the audience has changed. In the old days, affairs, both off and on screen were banned. Today, a film like *Arth* is both bold and popular. The audience is accepting the other woman's role. The film wouldn't have been accepted even ten years ago. . "

* * *

Once contemporary artistes, today Merchant, Zubeida and Goharbai are but tinsel names that were part of Bombay's Hollywood gliterati in the '30s and '40s. While photographing the three in their present environments, one couldn't help but notice the pride, the aloneness and the desolation in each of their faces. At times the cine artiste in them would surface as in the case of Mubarak Merchant who gently issued a set of well-rehearsed instructions regarding camera angle, focal length and availability of light before each 'take'. At other times, the very 'realness' of the situation seemed to dominate. Although Zubeida talked little, the sadness in her eyes spoke volumes for her in the clinical environment which is now hers. Even Goharbai, for all her articulate ponderings and positive acceptance of the changes in her life excitedly pulled out one of her treasured mementos: an oil on canvas portrait of a youthful Goharbai with all her golden trophies.

The common past that unites the three artistes hangs like a backdrop on a stage where the curtain has been finally drawn. The applause has faded, the audience has gone home. And, as one of the artistes points out: "It's their turn now. . . ." ♦

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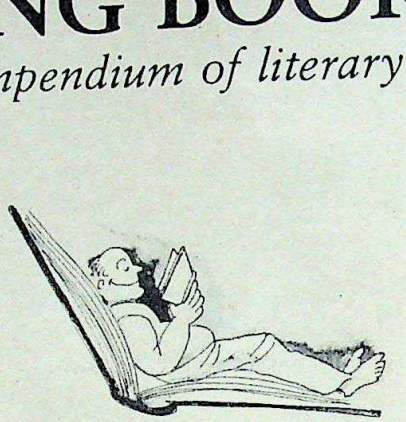
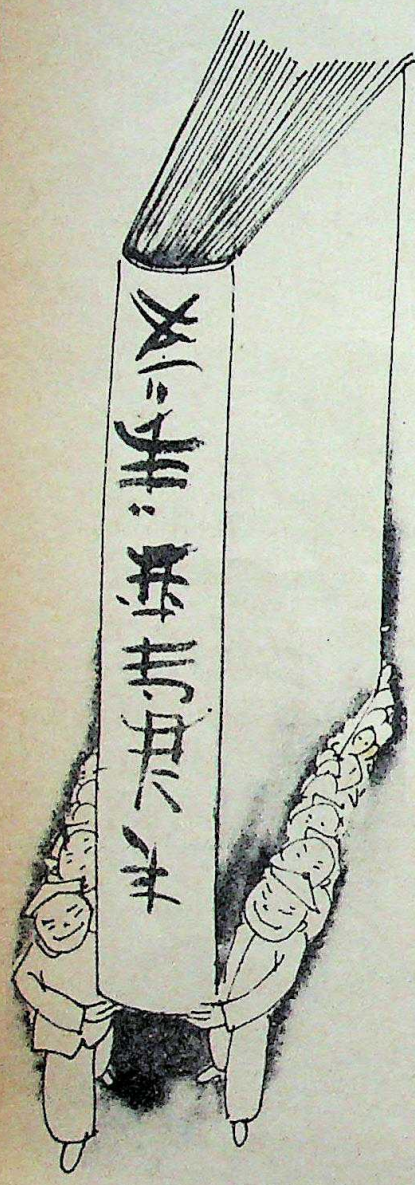
AMAZING BOOK FACTS

A compendium of literary trivia.



THE LARGEST BOOK
The Little Ref Elf, *a short story by William Wood, is printed in a book seven feet two inches high and ten feet wide when open. The giant volume is kept on display in a cave in Scotland.*



THE LARGEST ENCYCLOPAEDIA
The Great Standard Encyclopaedia *of China consisted of 22,937 separate handwritten volumes and was completed by 2000 experts in five years, from 1403-1408. Only one set of the encyclopaedia was produced. All but 370 volumes have disappeared.*

LONGEST LITERARY GESTATION
In 1901, the Oxford University Press commissioned Brigadier General Sir Harold Hartley to write Studies In The History Of Chemistry. *The book finally appeared in 1970, 70 years later.*

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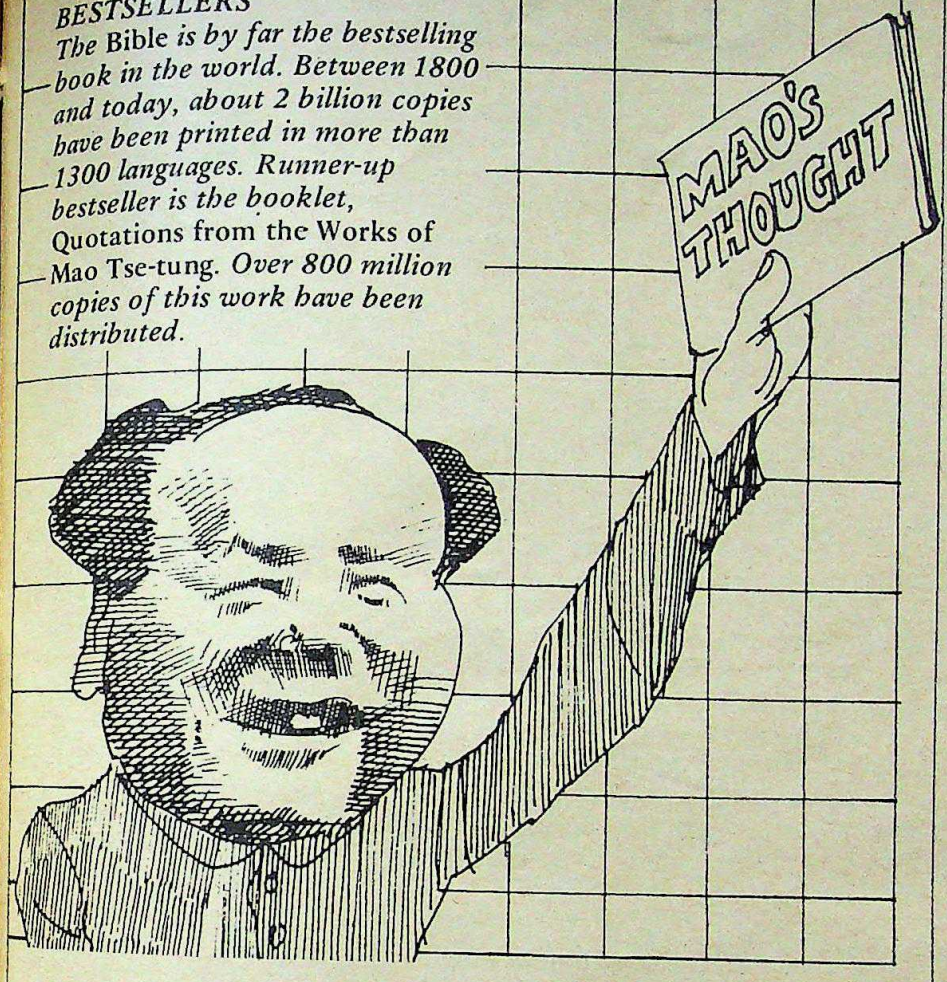
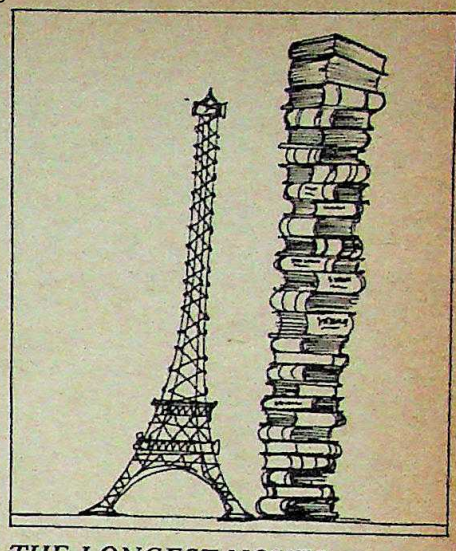
BEST SELLERS

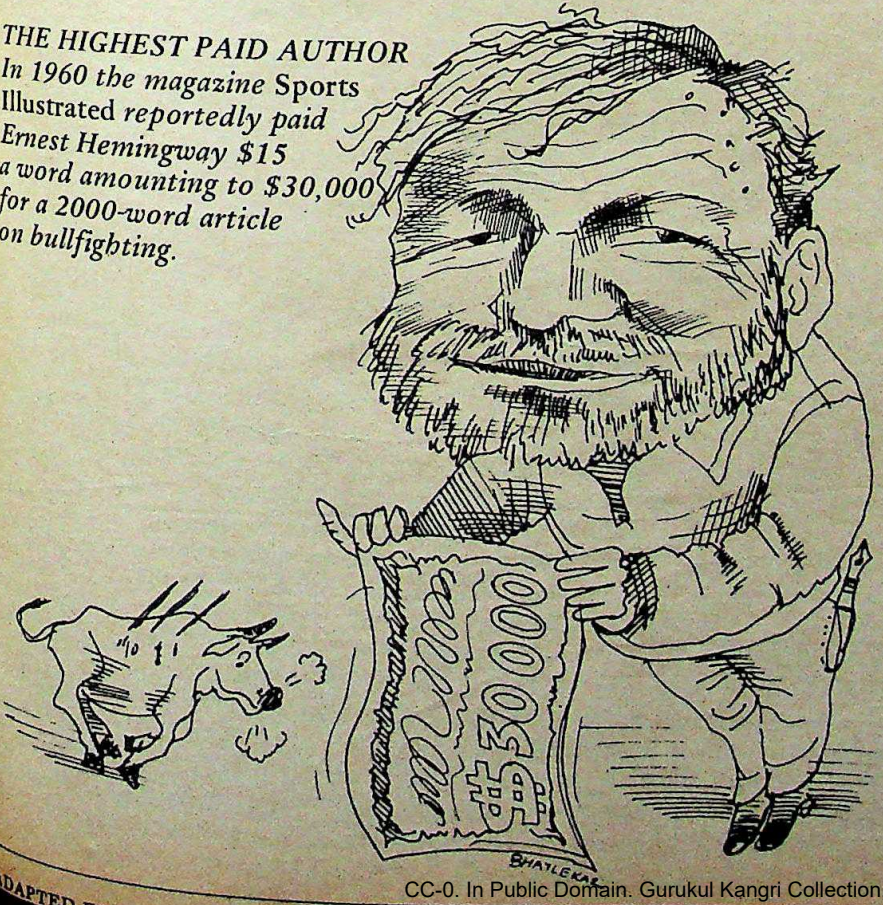
BESTSELLERS
The Bible *is by far the bestselling book in the world. Between 1800 and today, about 2 billion copies have been printed in more than 1300 languages. Runner-up bestseller is the booklet,* Quotations from the Works of Mao Tse-tung. *Over 800 million copies of this work have been distributed.*





THE LONGEST NOVEL
A French novel (English title : Men of Good Will*) by Jules Romains ran to 27 volumes and was published between 1932 and 1936. In Japan, a novel is running in short sections in the daily newspaper. It is expected to run to 40 volumes when finished.*

THE HIGHEST PAID AUTHOR
In 1960 the magazine Sports Illustrated *reportedly paid Ernest Hemingway $15 a word amounting to $30,000 for a 2000-word article on bullfighting.*



THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR
Over 672 million copies of the works of the Russian author Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili (1879-1953) have been sold or given away. Better know as Josef Stalin, Comrade Dzhugashvili has been required reading in Russia and other communist countries. French author Georges Simenon and the English writer Agatha Christie, both known for their thrillers, rank second to Stalin with joint sales of over 300 million.

ADAPTED FROM A XEROX EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS POSTER.

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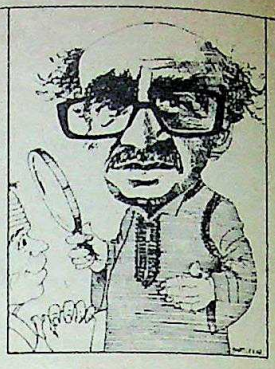
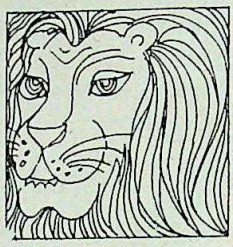
ASTROLOGY

Starting this month regular astrological forecasts by Bejan Daruwalla.

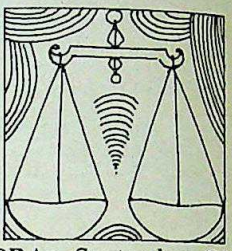


ARIES: March 21 to April 20: You will be in a position to act as a go-between between two parties, or groups, or clans. Success is certain. Partnerships and ties at various levels are predicted for you. In other words, business as well as personal attachments are probable. This aspect is specially highlighted between October 6 to 26. A journey with a stop-over is very likely. Thanks to the impact of Venus and Mars a job-switch is possible.

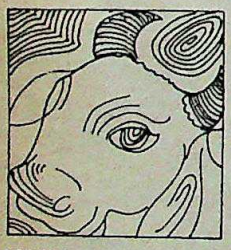
GEMINI: May 22 to June 21: In October, you will be on the move! By your wit and vivacity you will overcome the opposition. If you are interested in education, partnership, alliances, interior decoration, writing, teaching, acting, astrology, a new business venture, the chances of success are bright. Children will clamour for attention. Your brightest period is the fortnight October 6 to 21.



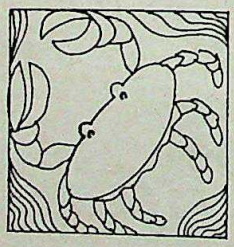
LEO: July 23 to August 23: You will be under considerable pressure to perform, to show results. You will be assured of success. Many Leos will be communicating, contacting people, circulating fast. Therefore, remember to brush up on your letters and make the phone calls you have been intending to. Success will depend upon your capacity to fan out to people and places. Get your travel kit ready for a trip at a very short notice.



LIBRA: September 24 to October 23: Sun and Neptune in fine positioning is suggestive of gains, gaiety and heavy expenses. Your work will be done despite a few twists and turns. Mercury in your sign from October 9 gives you the dash and dexterity to weave your way out of trouble. You will be communicating in grand style and winning over friends to your side. Important news and messages are on their way.

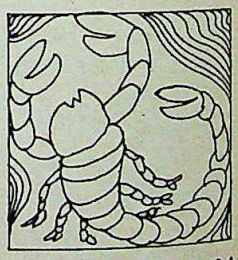


TAURUS: April 21 to May 21: This month will run in two directions: There will be a definite accent on employment and work area and your health and your relationships with colleagues and subordinates will need careful watching. You will continue with the creative pursuits of the last month. Venus and Pluto in fine formation shows ultimate fulfilment in your hobbies and pastime. Travel and group activities foretold.



CANCER: June 22 to July 22: As a rule, October is the month for home and the domestic scene. This October, however, you will be enlisting support for a creative venture, ripping the opposition apart, communicating at a feverish speed. Many crabs will be interested in renovation/decoration/alteration. Venus and Saturn in fine aspect means that you will consolidate your position and register a few gains. The health of your parents and in-laws is suspect.

VIRGO: August 24 to September 23: This is a money-making month. In the bargain, you will also enjoy yourself. Therefore, you will have the best of both worlds. Venus and Mars in your sign will give you the energy to shatter the opposition. A touch of romance or the beginning of a new venture, should warm your heart. The snag is that you could overdo a good thing and thus ruin it by excess. Caution is advised.



SCORPIO: October 24 to November 22: Secret alliance and ties, a rendezvous, heavy expenses, visits to depressing places (like clinics) are predicted for you in October. This does not mean that, October is a horrible month. But it does mean that you must get ready to cope with tensions and tribulations. The duo of Mars and Venus help you to socialise. You will have your fair share of well-wishers and supporters. But the overall trend could be one of slight opposition.

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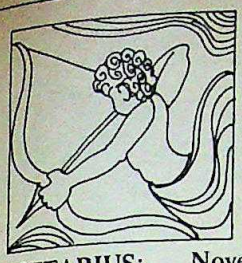
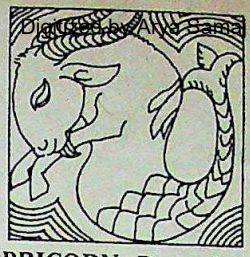
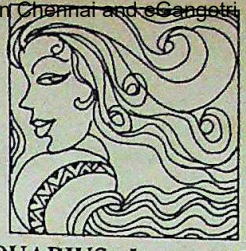


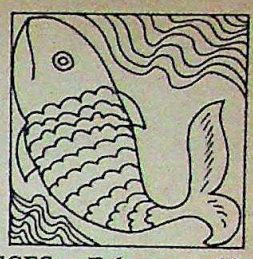
SAGITTARIUS: November 23 to December 21: The sun in your 11th sector helps you to entertain, socialise, amuse yourself, take chances. After the 23rd expenses will be very heavy. The last ten days your health might buckle under the strain of indulgence and extravaganza. Journeys and trips are quite possible this month. You may also expect foreigners and visitors to liven up matters for you. The Sun-Pluto conjunction helps you.



CAPRICORN: December 22 to January 20: This month and the next you may expect an important breakthrough. Important decisions in your profession or business will have to be taken. The conjunction of Venus-Mars aids you in competition and rivalry. The second half of the month finds you socialising. There is a distinct possibility of an alliance or a collaboration. It could be of vital significance for your career and business.

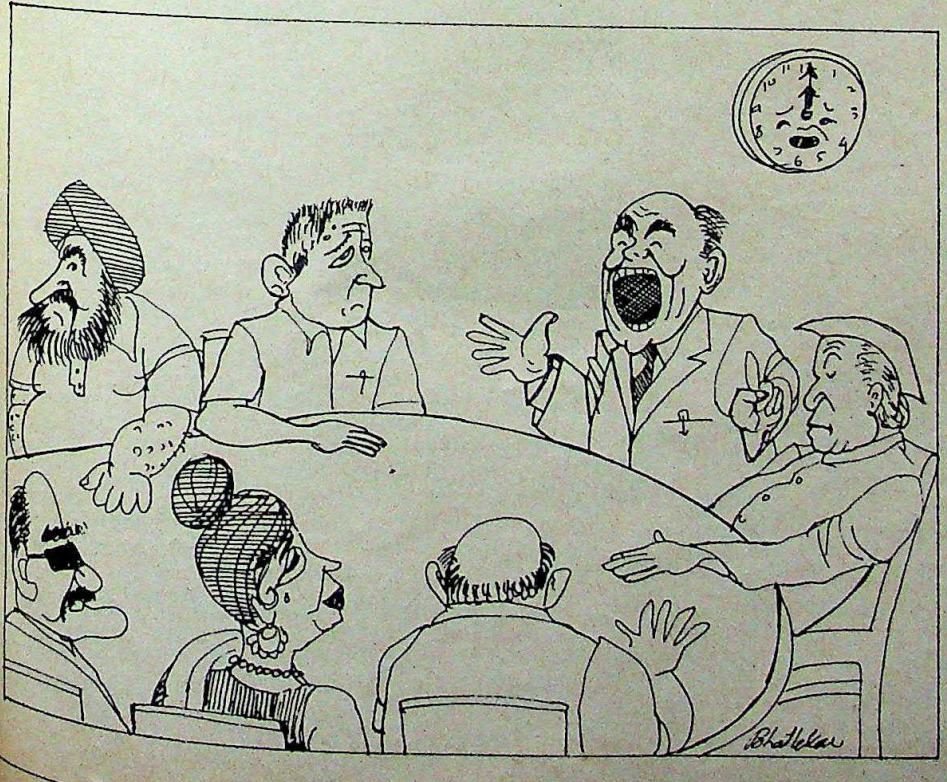


AQUARIUS: January 27 to February 18: You can now look forward to expansion and development. Simultaneously, the trend of loans and funds of the last month will be in active operation. Those of you interested or involved in research, marketing, teaching, writing, acting, publicity, sales, religion, philosophy, will find themselves at a distinct advantage. Your inspiration and intuition will lead you to the right answer. Therefore, learn to trust it.



PISCES: February 19 to March 20: Loans, funds, joint finance, insurance, windfalls, lotteries, legacy and taxes keep you busy. As Venus opposes your sign, intimate relationships are very probable. See that an unkind word or a mere slight does not hurt you beyond repair. In other words, do not be disturbed by trifles and a few misunderstandings. The last 11 days are for journeys, publicity, ceremony, research, education and exploration.

GREAT BORES OF OUR TIMES



"IF YOU ask me the Russians did the only thing they could have in the circumstances, I mean the plane was obviously a spy plane, sent by the Americans and what could the Russians do after all except teach these guys a lesson once and for all, as this article I read last Sunday said you know, that it's only the Western media backed by all these Zionist Jews who are spreading false propaganda and we should condemn the Americans in the strongest terms possible because the CIA is really getting powerful under Reagan now and as, this guy I know who reads the foreign papers was telling me, the whole world knows that all those 269 people were undercover agents. . . ."

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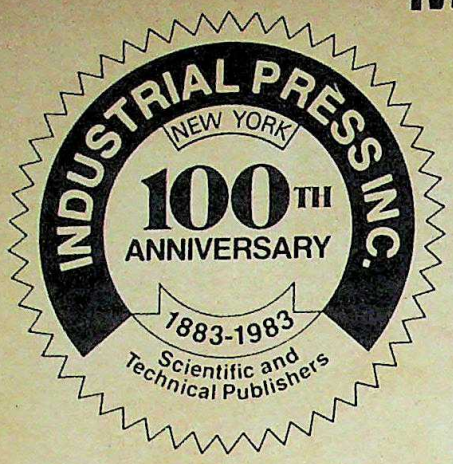
From the publishers of Machinery's Handbook



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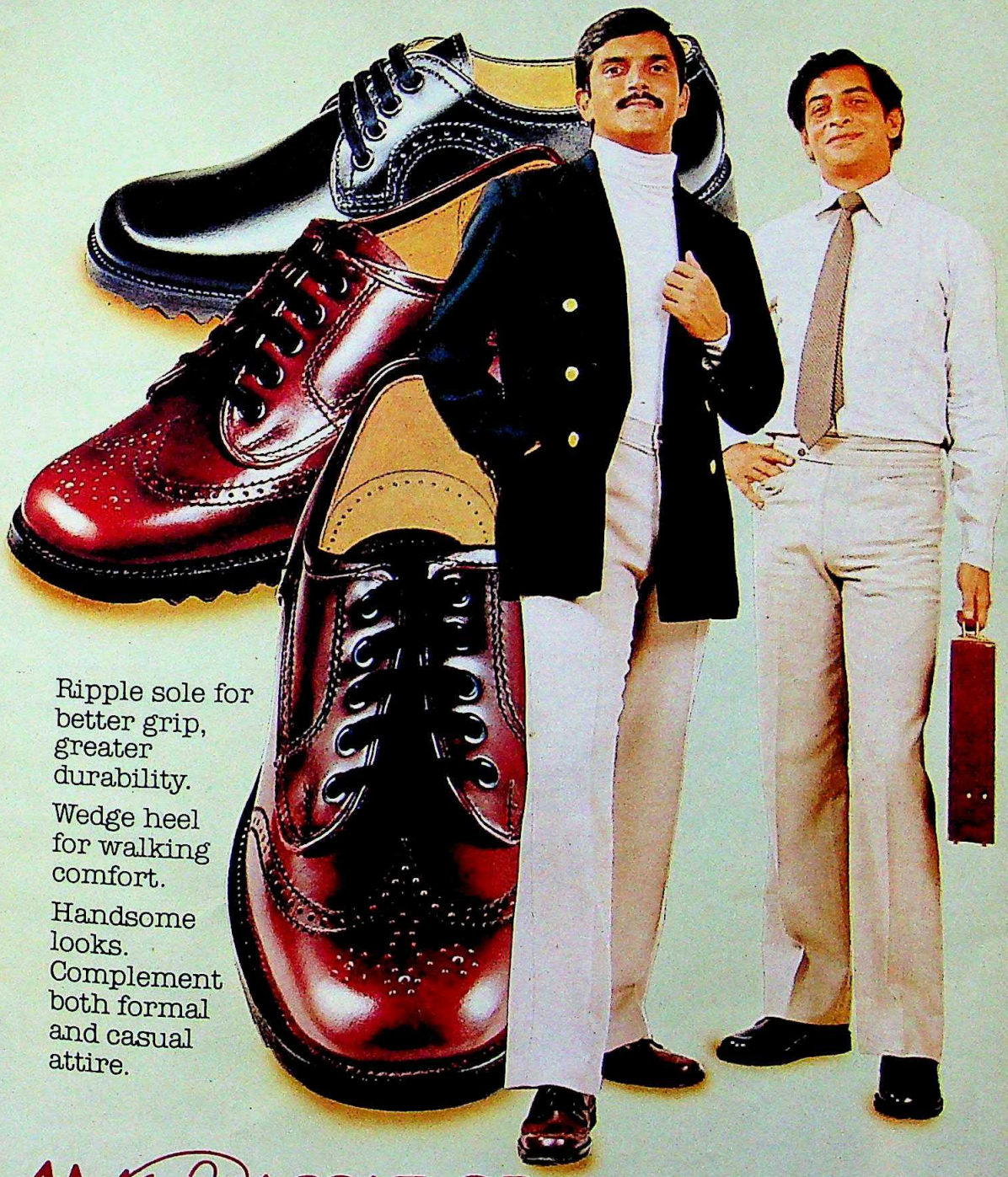

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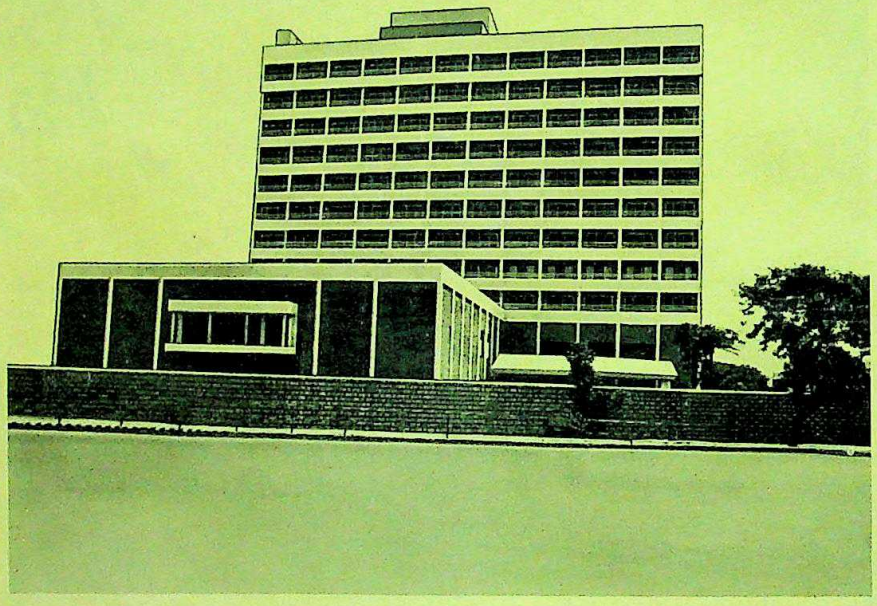

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Swraj Paul Comes Clean

On Location For Kim With Peter O'Toole

Gang Wars In The Streets Of Bombay

Rajmohan Gandhi Replies To Koestler

Lonely Times In The Rigs

The Man Who Would Be PM

Swamy On Why He Is Not A Clown

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Khatau
VOILES

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on the marquee

WE ARE A NATION OF 650,000,000. The Chinese number 800,000,000 at least. Between Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh and our other neighbours, there is a population of over 300,000,000 people. This area, thus, accounts for more than half of the inhabitants of the world today.

For many, many years, until the early '50s, most vital decisions affecting the peoples of these countries were taken in capitals outside this area. Even the Far East end of World War II against the Japanese, in which more than a million Asians perished, was planned and prosecuted from London, from Washington, from The Hague and from Paris. No Asian was consulted when atomic bombs were dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Then, when freedom came to one Asian country after another, more as a consequence of the dismantling of the Empires than as clear cut victories for freedom movements, the peoples, long suppressed, regarded their new situation as an end in itself – not many responding to the responsibilities it entailed, even on their own behalf. Subsequent experiences by way of curtailed freedoms, economic and social deprivations and even tyranny of local dictatorships have not changed these attitudes significantly. And the consequences of this neglect are all around us to see.

In the next few weeks, the nuclear arms race between the United States of America and the Soviet Union will be escalated to a mind-boggling level: 108 Pershing II medium range missiles and 464 Cruise missiles (translation: a million times more destructive capability than the first Hiroshima bomb) will begin to be deployed in West Germany, in Belgium, in the UK, in Italy and in Holland to achieve what leaders of NATO nations consider a correction of the present imbalance. Of course, the USSR says this will give the Western world an unacceptable advantage in nuclear weapons deployed against them, and of course, they will increase their arsenal to match the new Pershing and the Cruise missiles. The SS 20s already deployed by the Russians are no firecrackers.

A nuclear war will almost mean the end of our world. The world scene today is far more complex than ever before. The issues which divide Washington and Moscow are in sharper focus. The animosities have acquired almost fanatical fervour. Millions of Americans find President Reagan echoing them when he brands the Soviet Union evil. More menacingly, the danger of an accidental war has become real.

There is no escaping for Asia in the event of a nuclear accident or a nuclear war in Europe. The damage the radiation will cause in our region will be worse than death – the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki envy their dead. Yet, where life itself is at stake, we Asians do nothing. We say nothing. Perhaps, we understand nothing.

In the long and tortuous negotiations on arms control going on in Geneva for years, and in the decision the Americans, and the Western Europeans and the Russians have taken to dramatically increase the nuclear arsenal in Europe, half of the world population has not been consulted. We have not mattered a bit in Western or Russian thinking.

This is more our fault than Washington's and Moscow's. Millions of Europeans and Americans are presently protesting (the ordinary Russians are not, only because they are not allowed to protest, and also because they are not told the truth about what arsenal the USSR is threatening the West with), and raising their anguished voices against the latest escalation even though their popularly elected leaders are claiming that the escalation is for their own safety. The least we can do in India, in Bangladesh, in Indonesia, in Pakistan and in other nations of Asia – if we are to matter – is raise our voices too against this nuclear threat posed by Moscow and by Washington, by London and by Paris to our existence. The price of neglect this time could be death of all that lives. Here in India too.

R. V. Pandit

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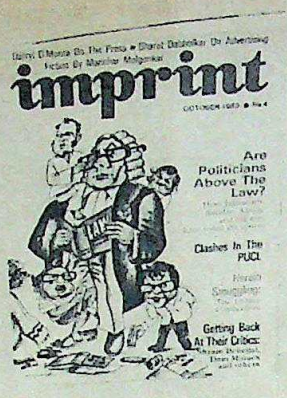

New Imprint

As a painter I would like to comment on the sketches in your September issue by Bhatlekar. You should consider yourself very fortunate. His caricatures reflect his talent and skill. Very few caricaturists match his style.

Vijay Chitnis
Nasik

I always read Ruskin Bond's articles with interest as I happen to belong to Dehra Dun. *The Tale Of A River* (August 1983) made interesting reading and Ruskin Bond has his own qualities in describing topographical details beautifully. His prose is poetry.

However, I may point out that the Siwaliks are much younger than the Himalayas and not 'much older' as mentioned by the author.

GS Tewari
Allahabad

Morarji-Sanjeeva Feud

Do you really think you have made some points in your article entitled *Morarji-Sanjeeva Feud* (August 1983)? Does the constitution really debar the President from keeping himself informed of happenings behind the scenes?

Why couldn't Morarji send a correct appraisal of situations to the President and save the latter from a lot of irritation, as also the Janata from a fall?

Chiranjeeva Sharma
Bhilai-1

Thanks to the Desai-Reddy controversy, I stumbled across your magazine. I must thank you for your lucid article *The People Have A Right To Know* (August 1983).

Equally remarkable for its independent and correct approach is the article *Love Thy Neighbour* (September 1983) by Ashok Gopal on the Tamil issue in Sri Lanka.

U Mishra
Bombay-58

Slip Disc

Apropos *Disco Sweeps The Heartland* (August 1983). The caption below Nandu Bhende's picture is incorrect. The songs are sung by Ashok Khare, a new playback singer and not by Nandu Bhende.

Prof (Mrs) PM Saraph
Bombay

Love Thy Neighbour

Apropos Ashok Gopal's article *Love Thy Neighbour* (September 1983). The author appears to be anti-Tamilian and lacks knowledge on the

Rushdie's Clarification

May I clear one confusion in your interview with me (*Salman Rushdie: Learning To Live With Fame And Shame*, **Imprint** September 1983).

You quote me as saying, "Originally I wanted to write a high tragedy about Pakistan. But. . .the people involved didn't deserve high tragedy." Then you comment: "Rushdie's solution has been to write a high tragedy, based on the Zia-Bhutto clash, but because history did not provide the tragic figures, he has created his own." This is not, I'm afraid, Rushdie's view of his solution.

I do not think that Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder are genuinely tragic figures. My response to history was to try and invent figures who might be seen as clowns who had somehow strayed into the leading parts of a tragedy. The situation is tragic; the protagonists are not.

Most reviewers of the book, fortunately, appear to have grasped this point. I was amazed that the *Sunday Observer*'s Iqbal Masud, to whom you make reference, did not; and since I evidently failed to make my meaning clear to you when we spoke, I felt I should write to set the record straight.

Salman Rushdie
London

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EXPLOSIVE LETTERS AND SANITISED 'HISTORY'

In your September 1983 issue the Executive Editor Shri Vir Sanghvi has made an outstanding and tall—if not preposterous—claim about **Imprint** getting possession of the 'explosive' correspondence between Morarji Desai and Sanjeeva Reddy. In the third paragraph of the article Shri Sanghvi mentions that **Imprint** would retain the rights to print the extracts and Arun Gandhi could find a publisher for the hardcover and paperback editions. This understanding is nothing short of underhand dealing between Arun Gandhi and your magazine as you can find from the facts of the matter given below, which are quite contrary to the claims made by Shri Sanghvi.

When Shri Arun Gandhi was Editor of **Imprint** he had written to me that he would like to serialise the extracts from the fourth volume of Shri Morarji Desai's autobiography, when completed. Shri Desai at that time was contemplating finishing the sequence for which I had volunteered to arrange and classify his papers, correspondence etc. However, after some time Shri Desai decided not to write the fourth volume—on the period corresponding to the Janata regime—as he could write nothing but the truth and the truth as he saw it would hurt his erstwhile colleagues and create bitterness. After months of discussion, Shri Desai finally agreed to my suggestion to convert his autobiography into a simple biography. I then suggested a panel of prominent writers from which he selected a leading educationist. But this gentleman withdrew from the assignment. Then I thought of Shri Arun Gandhi who had once wanted to serialise the autobiography. Shri Arun agreed to my suggestion provided Shri Desai would entrust the work to him. I then arranged a meeting between Shri Desai and Shri Gandhi. Eventually Shri Desai entrusted the task to Shri Arun under some specific conditions, one of which was that the papers entrusted to him were only for reference as source material and he should not divulge the confidential papers or quote directly from the correspondence. These were the strict injunctions. So you can see that the claims made by your Editor are untenable and unauthorised. If Shri Arun bargained with you it was a clear breach of trust between him and Shri Desai.

I have clarified the position as far as it touches me. I'm sure Arun Gandhi will himself agree to this. The entire sad episode has generated a sensitive atmosphere and your article will only add fuel to the raging fire.

The impact of these premature and unauthorised disclosures is not likely to help the great debate on the future of Indian democracy. Petty and cheap sensationalism created by such stunts are short-lived and have no lasting influence. Rational and right-thinking people separate the wheat from the chaff so that the public, mostly guileless, can weigh the truth and accept the essence.

Is it too much to hope that you will publish this clarification for the sake of truth and decency in our public life?

Kantilal A Trivedi
Bombay-19

Imprint *stands by its story. Arun Gandhi has already explained why he printed the original documents and not a sanitised 'history'.*

issue of Sri Lanka's Tamils.

The present Sri Lanka crisis is in no way similar to the Assam or Punjab issues. The Sri Lanka tragedy was a 'genocide'. The Jayewardene government joined hands with Sinhalese fanatics and massacred the Tamils. Moreover, the Sinhalese treat the local Tamils as 'foreigners', though they are citizens of Sri Lanka. The question of treating Assamese or Sikhs as foreigners in the Indian situation does not arise.

If the author is of the opinion that the official figures put out by both the Indian and British press are an exaggeration then one wonders why we should believe the tragedy (the incident) at all.

B Radha Krishna Rao
Hyderabad-13

Koestler On Gandhi

Your reprint of *The Yogi And The Commissar* (August 1983) is not only untimely during what you unabashedly call the 'Gandhi Boom'—but also irrelevant because the author himself did not live up to the spirit of his writings and died if not a Gandhian, a neo-Gandhian.

A few days before his death Koestler met Rusi Karanjia (editor of *Blitz*) in

London. He is believed to have told him that India can face the nuclear bomb by a mass chanting of the *Gayatri Mantra*!

Dr Kaushal Dhingra
New Delhi-5

Arthur Koestler's article, which was first published by **Imprint** in 1969, tries to release the muddle-headedness and sanctimonious evasion of vital issues indulged in by people in authority with the Gandhian heritage. The truth is that we cremated Gandhiji so completely that except for Rajghat, there is nothing to remind us of him in the country.

Gandhiji did not become great by his theories and views but because his life was an open book. Secondly, he did not preach what he did not practice and did not practice what he did not preach.

Gandhiji's decision to appoint Nehru Prime Minister was perhaps the most un-Gandhian act. Firstly, appointing a political heir is a negation of democracy. Secondly, Nehru was not a Gandhian by conviction. Thirdly, it is likely that he might have expected his political heir to play the role of a second Gandhi in the politics of independent India, not necessarily by clinging on to the Prime Minister's seat till death. Koestler has called him a Westernised progressive, but Frank Moraes had called him the last European who ruled India.

PS Sridhara Murthy
Bangalore-4

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Cover Photo : Ashok Gupta

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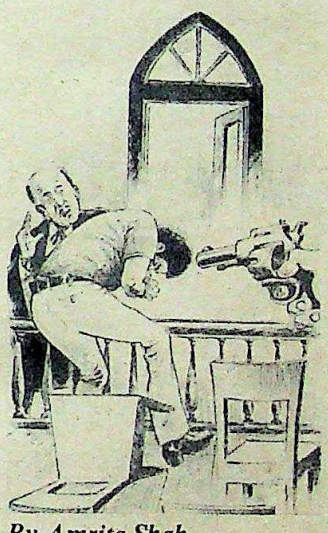

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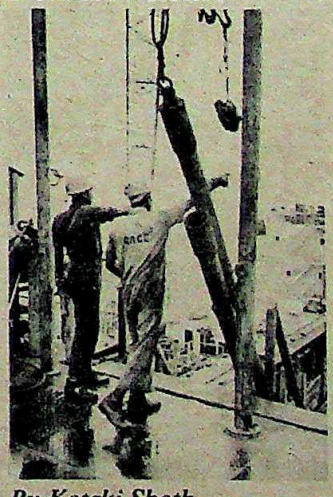

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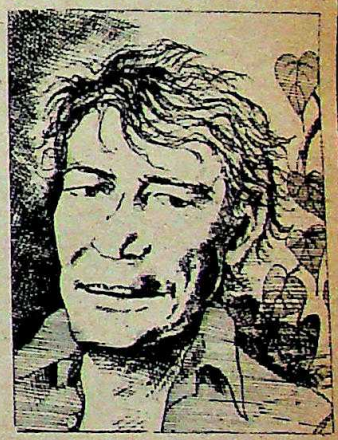

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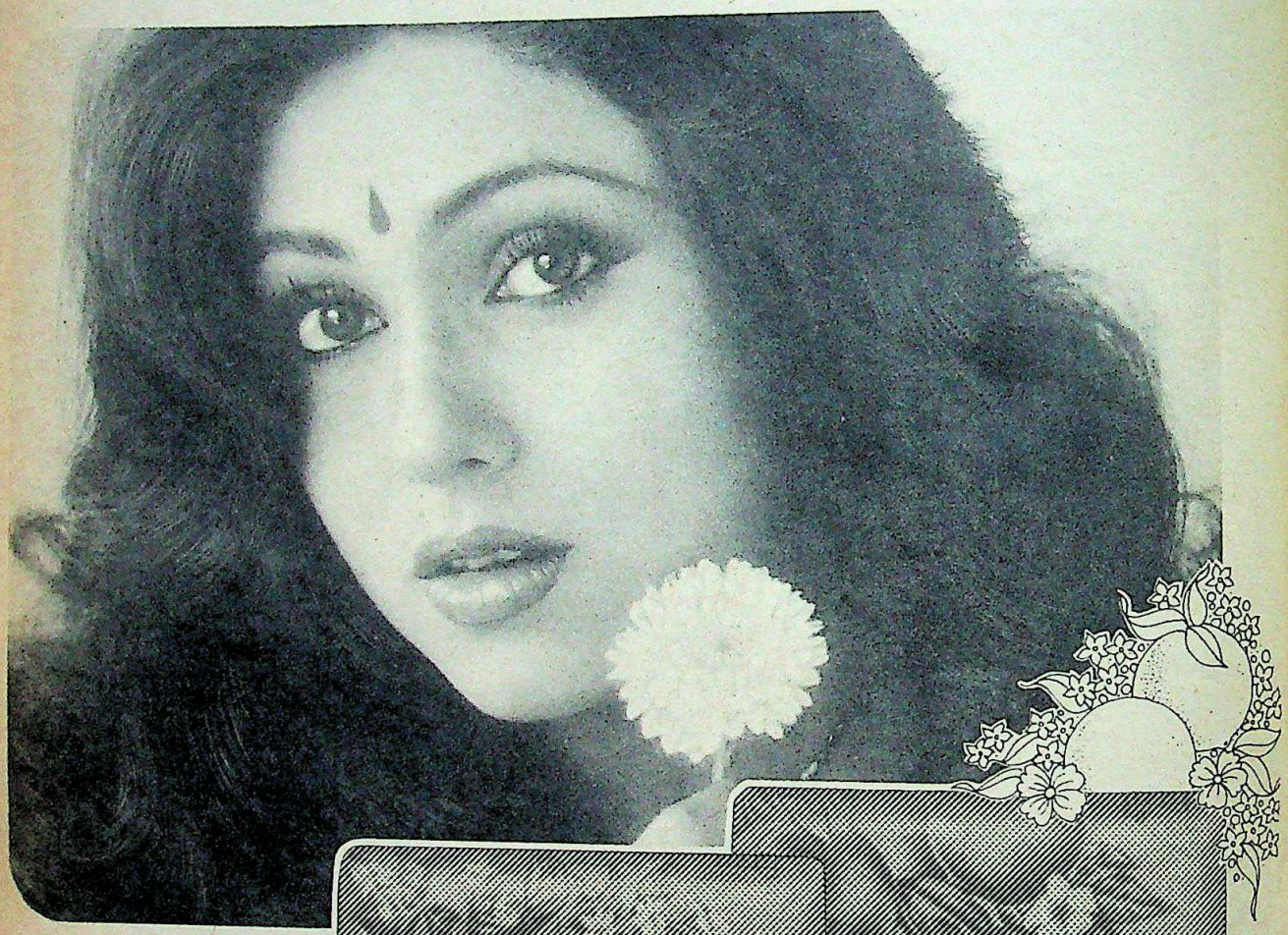

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BY MV KAMATH

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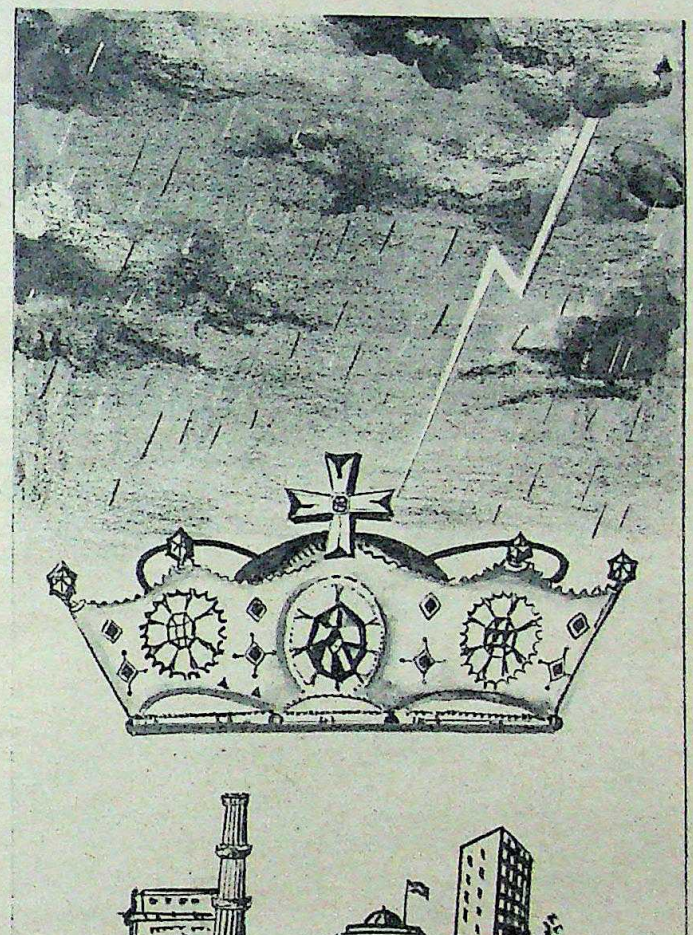
THE COLONIAL CLUB

To begin with, India was reluctant to join the Commonwealth. . .

AS PRIME MINISTER Indira Gandhi steps forward to receive Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain as Head of the Commonwealth, does she, one wonders, realise and remember how India almost kept out of the organisation and became a member only after much hesitation?

Officialdom in Britain was of divided mind. Clement Attlee, as Prime Minister, was clear in his mind that Britain should welcome India as a member of the Commonwealth and told Parliament so. Lord Louis Mountbatten, as Britain's last Viceroy to India was equally sure. So were the British Joint Chiefs of Staff. Indeed, Lord Ismay had proposed—and been authorised by the Joint Chiefs of Staff—to inform the British Prime Minister that 'from the military point of view. . .it was as nearly vital as anything could be, to ensure that India remained in the Commonwealth'.



But there were other voices, that doubted the wisdom of such a move. FF Turnbull, who had acted as secretary to Lord Pethick Lawrence sent to colleagues in the India Office and the Burma Office a *ballon d'essai* in the form of a draft letter which questioned 'whether it would be in the interests of the Commonwealth as a whole that India should remain within it'. Turnbull doubted whether, in view of India's 'lack of spiritual and racial kinship with the Dominions' it should be welcomed to the association. India, he felt, was likely to pursue an independent foreign policy, to oppose colonialism and to espouse the cause of Indian residents abroad where their interests conflicted with those of a Dominion of Britain herself.

From the Burma Office Sir Gilbert Laithwaite agreed that India did not have the same 'natural link with the Empire' as the 'White Dominions' and that, as with Southern Ireland, the Commonwealth might provide only a '*paper* relation' of little use in time of war. He questioned whether it would be worth allowing the link with the Crown to be jettisoned in order to retain a Republican India in the Commonwealth.

At the India Office, K Anderson saw 'no reason to suppose' that India would accept or carry out 'the broad unwritten obligations' of the Commonwealth membership and added for good measure that India's membership was bound to weaken 'the cohesion of the Anglo-Saxon Club'.

The Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir David Monteath felt that it would be unwise to rely on India being willing to remain in the Commonwealth but that, even if she did remain, Britain could not count on the same cooperation from her as the four major Dominions provided. India had none of their ties of sentiment or allegiance.

The Colonial Office, too, thought that India would be an awkward partner over colonial issues. Only the Dominion Office and the Foreign Office thought Indian membership of the Commonwealth was worth it on the grounds that India's departure would weaken the club and could be universally interpreted as a blow to British authority and prestige and as 'a dimunition in the political, military and economic strength of the Commonwealth as a whole'.

Opinion in India was equally divided. Sardar KM Pannikar was in favour of India being a Commonwealth member. But Nehru had felt that it would be impossible to think that India could remain in the Commonwealth; however, by the time Mountbatten left for London on May 18, 1947, he had seen to it that Congress opinion had more or less swung towards remaining in the Commonwealth. The prospect of a stronger Pakistan had become a compelling reason in the minds of the Congress High Command.

When India made it clear that it wanted to remain a 'sovereign democratic republic' there were British fears that this would make it impossible for India to be a Commonwealth member.

MV Kamath is a former Editor of The Illustrated Weekly Of India. *He is a frequent contributor to* Imprint.

ILLUSTRATION BY BHATLEKAR

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The Conference will give Mrs Gandhi a chance to prove what a good hostess she can be.

On March 2, 1949, Attlee discussed the matter with Sir Winston Churchill who thought that it should be possible to retain even a republican India in the Commonwealth. The view was conveyed to King George VI. But both Churchill and the King envisaged the King of England becoming the President of free India! That dream had to be shattered. And this was left to be done by the Commonwealth Prime Ministers meeting in London calling on the King. As Attlee gently put it, it became the first time 'a King ever had the collective advice of *all* his Prime Ministers' to tell him that his hope of becoming India's President was beyond practical realisation.

In their collective wisdom the Commonwealth Prime Ministers submitted that the King was no longer Emperor and that his proposed designation as President of India was out of the question. The best that could be done was for the King to be called the 'Head of the Commonwealth'.

George VI heard them in silence and later his Prime Minister, Clement Attlee noted with a touch of pathos: "George VI made not the slightest objection to removing the Imperial Crown from his head—the Chief Jewel of the British Empire. That is a remarkable fact. It shows the great advantage of having a King who was never static but who moved with the times."

So the King of England duly became Head of the Commonwealth and now his daughter, the Queen, has been welcomed to Imperial Delhi too as Head of the Commonwealth. Turnbull and Monteath's fears partly came true. India did oppose colonialism. India went on to have its own foreign policy. On some matters, as on Suez, India clashed directly with Britain—and was no help—except to pull her chestnuts out of the fire. But there were very few moments of India leaving the Commonwealth. The irony is that the Congress High Command had originally softened its stand of wanting to stay out from a genuine fear that with Pakistan in, life may become difficult for India. Today it is India which is in and Pakistan which is out. And out Pakistan will probably remain. MA Jinnah did not want to be 'kicked out' of the Commonwealth and had taken Churchill's advice that as long as he stood firm, he could not be expelled because Britain 'would never stand for the expulsion of loyal members of the Empire'. Pakistan quit voluntarily. And though there has been talk of its rejoining for nearly a decade now, nothing has come of it so far. General Zia does not seem likely to re-apply for membership either.

Has membership of the Commonwealth brought India any gain? This may be arguable. But it certainly has brought India no loss. On the contrary, India is heard with respect in Commonwealth circles which, all told, is probably a gain of some sorts. Certainly it has given Indira Gandhi a chance to prove what a good hostess she can be. And who says that is a poor gain?

Mrs Gandhi, we may be sure, will draw the utmost mileage out of this august meet. She is capable of drawing blood out of stone. We will have a spate of resolutions to add to the impressive list passed at earlier meetings that were observed more in the breach than in the execution.

There will be the usual excitement that accompanies all such gatherings. The government-controlled broadcasting media will continue to project her as a world leader and she will be seen deep in conversation with various Heads of State. The photographers, will have a field day and later these pictures will be used to advance her image at home.

But this reflects more on Mrs Gandhi and the state of our country than it does on the Commonwealth! What good we can expect of this entire *tamasha* in Delhi, of course, remains to be seen. One answer is to paraphrase Old Kaspar: "Why, that I cannot tell, but t'was a famous gathering."

♦

NEW

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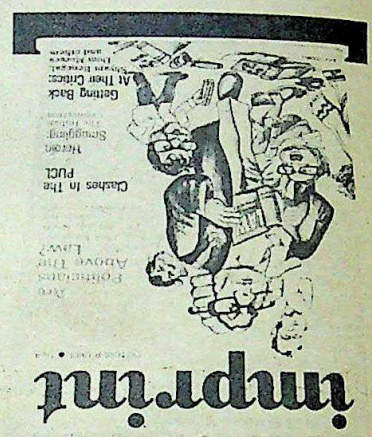

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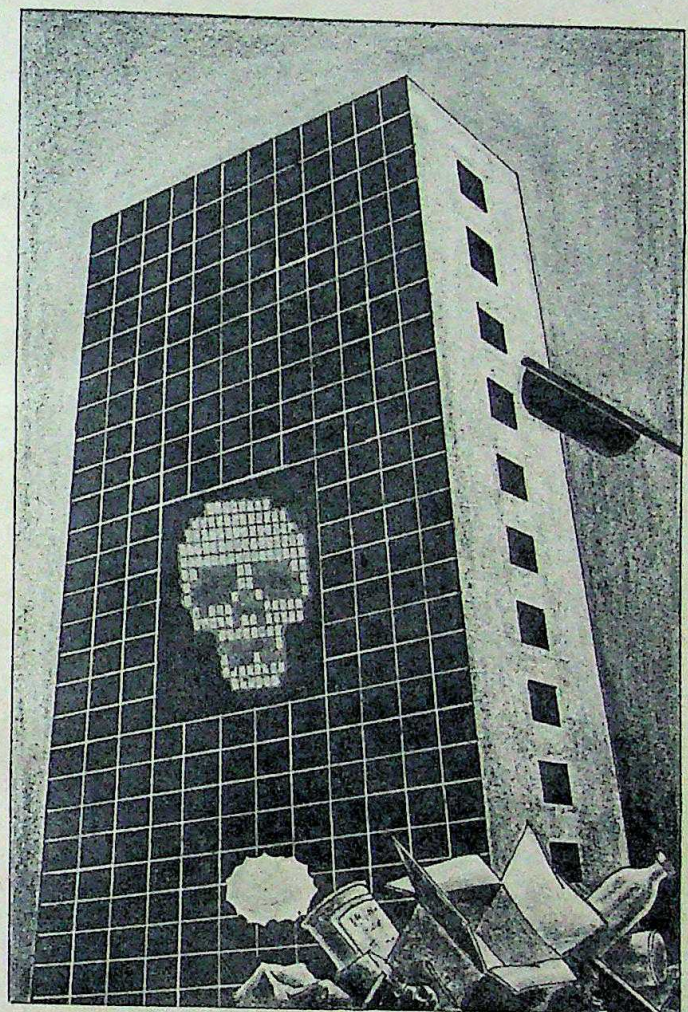
BY ARUN CHACKO

THE 'PARIS OF THE EAST'?

Just like the real Paris, Jagmohan's Delhi is falling apart.

SHAH JEHAN IS deservedly acknowledged as one of the world's greatest builders. He combined aesthetics with durability and the highest quality. Today his exquisite 400-year-old structures promise to last at least as much more, giving Delhi character, continuity and permanence.

Lutyens' structures, though equally impressive, have some time yet to really prove themselves. Though the more prominent ones have been around 50 years without showing much wear and tear, some of colonial New Delhi's residences have begun to come apart. Obviously recent government maintenance has been sorely lacking. But concerned contractors must have cut corners and fiddled a little.



Delhi's Lieutenant Governor, Mr Jagmohan, will deservedly be remembered for building vast areas of monotonous, high-priced slums on land acquired from poor farmers at a rupee or two per square yard. Otherwise the acquired land was sold to commercial establishments at several thousand times the price paid.

Today the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) is far and away the country's premier land racketeer. Its profiteering would shame the oil cartels. At least the oil companies give customers genuine oil, admittedly at a price which has no relation to production costs. The DDA gives flat-seekers death traps which sometimes collapse during construction and certainly begin to thereafter. And they have no option but to take it, since the organisation has ensured virtually nothing else is available.

Mr Jagmohan, more than anyone else, is responsible for the organisation's undeserved monopolistic growth and systematic looting. He was its long-time head before and during the Emergency, acquiring considerable notoriety. The DDA stranglehold on land and building activity, combined with its arbitrary policies have led to acute shortage of adequate housing for one of the country's fastest growing cities. And real estate prices compare quite well with New York and Tokyo.

From time to time, the DDA puts out full-page newspaper advertisements highlighting its own achievements. But every second Delhiwalla can tell you his own personal experience of its mind-boggling profiteering, corruption and incompetence. Now an official enquiry has merely confirmed that.

A five-member Fact Finding Committee appointed by Lieutenant Governor Jagmohan, has described at least 10,000 houses built by the DDA in recent years as structurally unsound and very poor. These are a very large proportion of total constructions.

Since the Committee, set up after the collapse of nine partially built houses in January this year, consisted of two high DDA officials besides other government functionaries, the findings are particularly damning. One presumes the official would have at least tried to soften the blow.

"The general impression gathered by the Committee is that the quality of work in most of the houses is very poor," the report says. "There was no emphasis on quality of construction. . . . No one seemed to have bothered about the structural safety of the houses."

Elsewhere it adds, "The engineers in charge of supervision have also completely ignored the normal norms of sound construction of a building." And the Committee wasn't even talking about the 10,000 houses they found particularly dangerous.

It continued, "Strengthening measures have to be taken in almost all the houses, and special attention has to be given for the above mentioned poor quality work." But, it concedes, there is a lot of difference between an originally sound construction, and a reinforced one.

The report goes on to detail the substandard and often bogus construction material invariably used, which has undoubtedly resulted in a lot of

Arun Chacko is Associate Editor of Boston's The World Paper. This is a regular column.

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officials and contractors getting rich quick. But it also reveals the differing standards in Shah Jehan's and Lutyens' Delhi, and that of Mr Jagmohan.

* * * *

WE HAVE, AS a nation, a penchant for coining descriptive names for our 'beauty spots' and our historically, culturally or politically significant cities based on what we think are their foreign (ie Western) counterparts; thus, we call Kashmir, the 'Switzerland of the East'.

For long the capital has, quite inappropriately, been occasionally labelled the 'Paris of the East'. Dr Karan Singh, when Tourism and Civil Aviation Minister, started it over a decade ago. And thereafter the title has been constantly repeated.

Quite apart from the fact anyone familiar with the increasingly scruffy Paris of the '80s would not want to draw comparisons, the only thing really similar is the rudeness of the people. Whereas Parisian rudeness comes from a hardly justifiable cultural arrogance, the Delhiites' comes from a crude alien culture and philosophy inflicted on them since Partition.

Other than that the city is in a complete mess. The country likes to make bogus claims about having the world's third largest reservoir of scientific talent, but its capital cannot be assured uninterrupted electricity supply despite adequate installed capacity. Cows roam the streets unhindered creating serious traffic hazards, which kill unsuspecting scooterists and cyclists. And the less said about the police and the municipality, the better.

The police is a thoroughly inefficient and corrupt force, probably responsible for more crime than it prevents. For ordinary citizens to get any redress is impossible, unless of course you have the power to harm. Then, mysteriously, things begin to work at an impressive speed.

Municipal employees are no different. Uncollected garbage is a serious health hazard. As a senior municipal official complained, "Political interference at all levels has destroyed the administration. Only 20 per cent of the city's *safai karamacharis* show up for duty each day. But that doesn't mean they do any work. And there is absolutely nothing we can do."

One consolation is Paris is getting a bit like Delhi, and in the future could conceivably be called the 'Delhi of the West'. ♦

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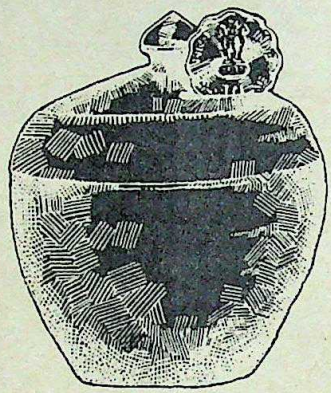

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BY ASHOK GOPAL Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri

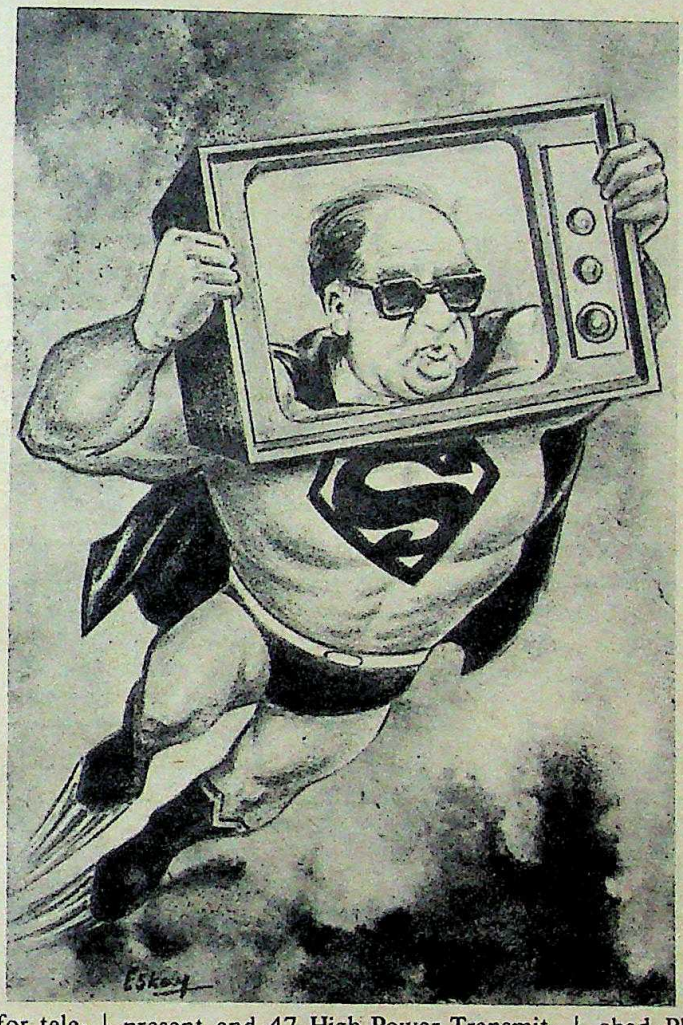
DREAMERS OF THE AIR?

Bhagat's ambitious TV expansion plan may never materialise.

"A HIGH LEVEL decision seems to have been taken to soft sell the (Twenty Point) Programme." When **Imprint** made that claim in September, we were not fully aware of the nation-wide extent or frequency of the Twenty Point propaganda effort. Now the office of the Director General, All India Radio, informs us that in the 12 months preceding September the *total number of Twenty Point Programme broadcasts was 27,611* (emphasis mine). The figure surely substantiates the private media's claim that the ruling party is grossly misusing public broadcasting; indeed, it contradicts our claim that the government is 'soft selling' the Programme.

But as for Union Minister HKL Bhagat's Rs 68-crore special expansion plan, the private media's fear that it was specifically devised to broadcast propaganda for the coming elections, now seems unfounded. Bhagat's plan, it appears, may not materialise.

On September 19 he announced that the total outlay for television next year would be Rs 184 crores. The figure apparently includes the Rs 68 crores meant for the special expansion plan, another Rs 85 crores for the utilisation of INSAT-1B and the rest for the Planning Commission-approved television expansion schemes under the Sixth Five Year Plan (Bhagat's special plan was not examined by the Planning Commission; it is purely his and Mrs Gandhi's brainchild.) Thus by the end of the Sixth Five Year Plan (March 1985) we should theoretically have 132 Low Power Transmitters (LPTs) as against 20 at present and 47 High Power Transmitters (HPTs)—there are only 21 at present. They will increase Doordarshan's 'coverage' from the present 19 per cent of the population to 53 per cent plus an additional 17 per cent who will receive weak signals.



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All the above figures are laughable. Firstly, as **Imprint** stressed, Bhagat's figures talk of a nonsensical 'potential' audience, not the actual numbers who will buy and watch television. Even by the government's own figures, television's present 'actual' audience of two million will only reach four million by the end of 1984. In other words, even if Bhagat's plan is miraculously executed, the number of people who will watch television will only be a minuscule fraction of his dream audience of 70 per cent.

HPTs are manufactured in India by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Bangalore. Under the Sixth Five Year Plan, BEL is to supply only nine HPTs but now thanks to Bhagat's jugglery, it will have to produce 13 of them in the same period. The hundred-odd LPTs Bhagat wants will be manufactured in India *for the first time*. (The 20 LPTs installed for the Asiad were imported.)

Besides this, of course, is the issue of requisitioning the land for transmitters, constructing the buildings to house the engineering equipment and staff. Whether all this 'infrastructure' will be available in the next 18 months is extremely doubtful, especially when even long-standing Planning Commission-approved schemes for the expansion of the television network have not been realised. Only recently the Commission asked for the 'speeding up of television centre construction in Ahmedabad, Bhopal, Trivandrum and Gauhati' so that they could be completed within the Sixth Plan period. It also admitted that programme production centres at Raipur, Muzzafarpur and Gulbarga are likely to 'spill over' to the Seventh Plan.

The Ministry does not seem to view the problem of beaming hundreds of programmes to diverse audiences all over the country from New Delhi, as a serious one.

And the most significant question remains: How many states can afford to provide community sets (each costing around Rs 35,000) so that the 'common man' (to whom INSAT-1B is ostensibly directed) can watch programmes?

♦

Ashok Gopal, an **Imprint** *staffer, researched our September cover story on the media,* Rulers Of The Air.

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BY AG NOORANI

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MASOCHISM AND MACHISMO

India has much to learn from the blunders of America's foreign policy.

THE DEBASEMENT OF Indian politics has found an accurate reflection in the steep deterioration of Indian political writing. Even at the best of times, however, foreign affairs never received from Indian journalists and even academics the study it requires. We have had apologias for the official line—whether out of a mistaken notion of patriotism or in expectation of reward—or angry denunciations. The cool, clinical approach to the craft of diplomacy holds little attraction for the Indian commentator. Ironically, the most fervent of our apologists ardently admire American dissenters in the media and academia which only testifies to a certain lack of maturity.

American writing on world affairs did not awaken to maturity all of a sudden. It was a slow process and owes a lot to the writings of Hans J Morgenthau, George F Kennan, Louis Halle and Henry A Kissinger, to mention some.

Stanley Hoffmann arrived later on the scene and carries on the fine tradition. Born in Vienna, he lived and studied in France from 1929 to 1955 when he moved to Harvard where he teaches French intellectual and political history, American foreign policy and a few related subjects. Since 1960 he has turned out one striking book after another. *Primacy Or World Order*, published in 1978, was an excellent work analysing the choice confronting America—a return to the cold war in a vain bid to re-establish America's primacy or a quest for a world order ensuring security for all. By 1978 the Carter administration was well-launched on a drift from one blunder to another.

This collection of essays sketches the background (the Nixon-Kissinger years), describes the Carterian blunders and proceeds to analyse the choices confronting Ronald Reagan who rode to power by exploiting the reaction to Carter's policies or lack of them. Since, both, masochism and machismo are ever-present in our highly self-conscious drive to attaining the status of a regional power, these essays, which mercilessly expose the implications of the twin-traits, are of enormous relevance to us. And, all the more so because their realistic description of international society is very educative.

He mentions 'three lasting features' of the present day system—the force of nationalism, the 'revolutionary phenomenon' and the superpowers' conflict. He does not consider the conflict as an aberration or as something which can be 'ended' but rather as a fact of life—a highly dangerous reality which cannot be wished away or extinguished. But it can be and should be controlled, contained and regulated. At stake is nothing less than human survival.

Nuclear weaponry is responsible for peace between the superpowers. But it is a very fragile peace. Proliferation of nuclear weapons is an ever-present threat. So is the failure to tackle discord. The balance of terror leads to complacency. "Deterrence eliminates, or delays interminably, the moment of truth—in the Middle East, for instance. Because nothing ever gets settled, conflicts reappear again and again."

Professor Hoffmann mentions three possible courses which can help to mitigate the conflict. They are: the adoption of an agreed set of rules to limit 'the intensity and risks' of a conflict which has to be lived with; the liquidation of all colonial situations; and, a drastic reconsideration of the role of nuclear weapons in the strategies of the superpowers.

This brings one to the heart of the matter, which is a readiness to accept the basic principle that the adversary also has his interests to protect. Much of Indian thinking on adversary-situations is flawed by an arrogant refusal to concede the legitimacy of any interest other than our own. Only if this basic principle is accepted can a reconciliation of conflicting interests be attempted at all. It cannot be a perfect or neat solution. It will be patchy and messy given the dynamics of the state

DEAD ENDS: American Foreign Policy In The New Cold War *by Stanley Hoffmann; Ballinger Publishing Company.*

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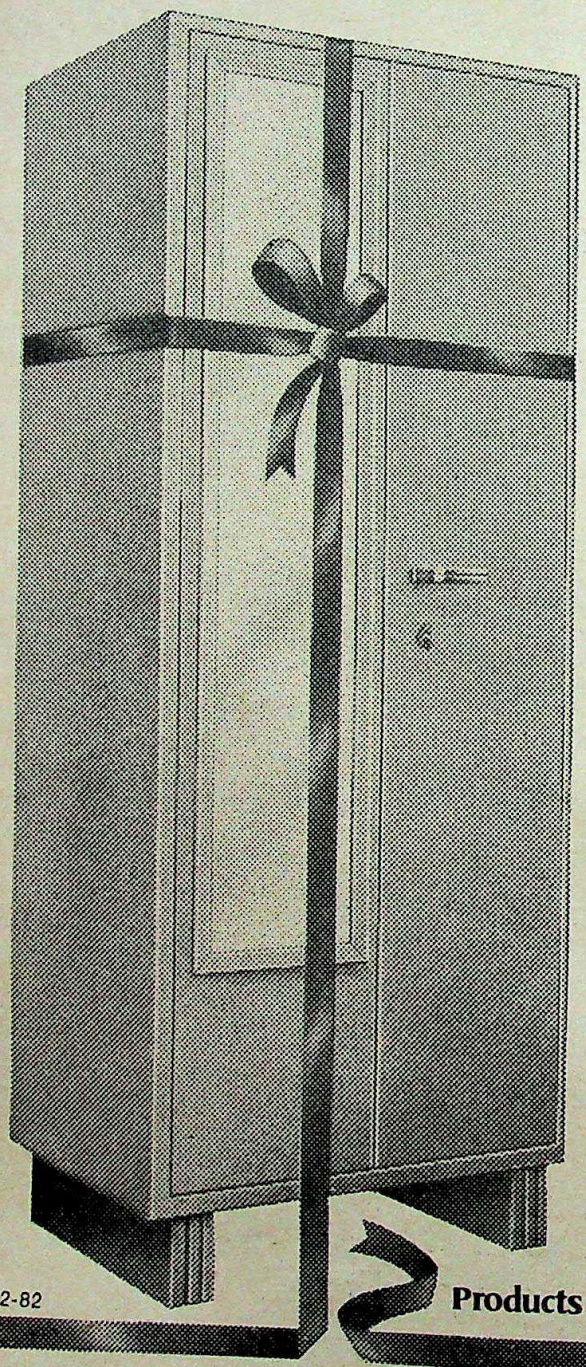

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There is no Soviet master plan. Like any other power the Soviet Union seizes any opportunity for gain that comes its way.

system. But the exercise is inescapable.

For all their might the superpowers find themselves helpless in many situations. They find it easier to deprive each other of possible gains than to snatch gains already acquired. Both are dependent on their respective clients' whims. Castro has led the Soviet Union into embarrassing situations repeatedly. Both superpowers have had to arm allies over whose decisions they had no control—US military aid to Pakistan, for instance.

In so complex a situation, the ignorant bigot is a menace to peace. "The trouble with simple-minded leaders is that, like simple-minded theorists of international relations, they tend not only to analyse all politics in terms of power, but also to equate power with the ability to coerce. Power remains the dominant concept for the study of international relations. But the flaws of a 'realism' that fails to distinguish between the nature and the role of power in an integrated community endowed with a central authority and the nature and role of power in the international milieu need to be pointed out more than ever. So do the flaws of a realism that does not distinguish between power as a means or intermediate goal, that has to be tailored to specific objectives and power as a yardstick comparable to money in economics. A traditional realism that equates power with military might, or a modern realism that analyses the structure of the international system only in terms of the distribution of state capabilities—as if the latter were all measurable and equally significant independently of their usability and effectiveness—is an insufficient basis for a theory of international politics. Today, military might is only one dimension of power among many." Our Swadeshi pundits who hold forth on world affairs with an air of supreme confidence on India's role as a regional power ought to imbibe these basics of sound, as against phony 'realism'.

The new orthodoxy that holds forth among the Reagan administration as it wages the new cold war is particularly dangerous because of its disdain for the spirit of moderation. It works desperately hard to perpetuate the *status quo* because it sees 'the Red menace' in every movement for change. Not surprisingly, the US Secretary for Defence, Caspar Weinberger, detected pro-Soviet slogans in the campaign for democracy in Pakistan during his recent visit to that country. The lessons of Iran are lost on the Bourbons of the Reagan administration. Indeed, their voluble representative at the UN Jeane Kirkpatrick, has drawn a fine distinction between the hateful 'totalitarians' and the acceptable 'authoritarians'.

Professor Hoffmann perceptively notes: "Many of the potentially most unstable countries happen to be clients or allies of the United States—they range from Guatemala to Pakistan and the Philippines, from Haiti to Morocco and Egypt; from El Salvador to Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. Our twin worries, in years to come, will be to prevent explosions in such places from becoming manifestations of anti-Americanism and opportunities for Soviet influence; and to prevent explosions and disruptions in the Soviet universe from leading to general war. The one thing we will not be able to do, however hard we try, is to prevent explosions. Rather than direct aggression, it is the exploitation of revolutionary conditions, either through subversion or through encouragement of local revolutionary groups, which is the most likely form of Soviet expansion. In Afghanistan, indeed, it was such exploitation that, having been a failure, led to aggression. In other words, the key issue—for the rest of the century—is the issue of revolution."

Stung by deceit in Vietnam, the US Congress tied the hands of the US administration. Watergate did the rest to impair its credibility. The Russians took the fullest advantage of it to move ahead in Ethiopia and Angola. Carter simply lacked the capacity to devise a proper response. Reagan's response is a simplistic one based on the worst-case scenario.

It testifies to the author's objectivity that, unlike Morgenthau and Kissinger, sanity does not desert him when he turns his attention to America's sacred cow—Israel. He sums up the problem in a passage which deserves to be quoted *in extenso*:

"The fundamental obstacles to peace are Israel's refusal to move in the direction of a settlement of the Palestinian problem entailing self-determination for the Palestinians (indeed, the policies followed by Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin make impossible a settlement of the Palestinian issue acceptable to any Arab state) and America's failure to confront Israel except on marginal issues. If Israel showed a willingness to put an end to the creeping annexation of the West Bank and to accept the principle of self-determination for the Palestinians, then Arab intransigence, which has already been dented since Sadat's breakthrough, would probably recede further or be limited to eccentric states. In coming years, the United States will have to choose between a course that, if continued, will undermine the positions of moderate Arab governments with which Washington has been co-operating; and a more energetic course that will severely strain the special US relationship with Israel and the body politic in America. Only the second course offers any positive prospect for fulfilling the strategic and economic interests of the United States in the Arab world, as well as for ensuring Israel's long-term ability to live in peace and to play a role as a member of the (troubled) family of Middle Eastern nations."

There are areas where events have overtaken the author or he has been less than perceptive; eg Sino-Soviet relations. But the volume is a fine work of stimulating analysis. ♦

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The Man Who W

What makes a Harvard professor turn to Indian politics? Can India's first urban, middle-class politician ever amount to anything?

Subramaniam Swamy is young. He is controversial. And he is bright.

But will he ever become Prime Minister? Our cover story argues that he might have a better chance than most people realise.

EXACTLY FOUR YEARS AGO, SUBRAMANIAM Swamy told me that he would be Prime Minister of India by 1989. The statement, delivered with cold finality, came half-way through an otherwise innocuous interview. We had been discussing what Swamy did in his spare time and I was, as a result, somewhat unprepared for a prediction about his political future. I remember suddenly sitting upright and staring at him to see if he was serious. He was.

"I have a feeling of destiny," he continued. "I know that in ten years, I will be Prime Minister."

"How can you be so sure?" I recall asking.

"Tell me one other politician of my generation who is as widely known as I am?" he challenged.

"Sanjay Gandhi," I replied.

"Oh, he doesn't count," he said dismissively. (This was,

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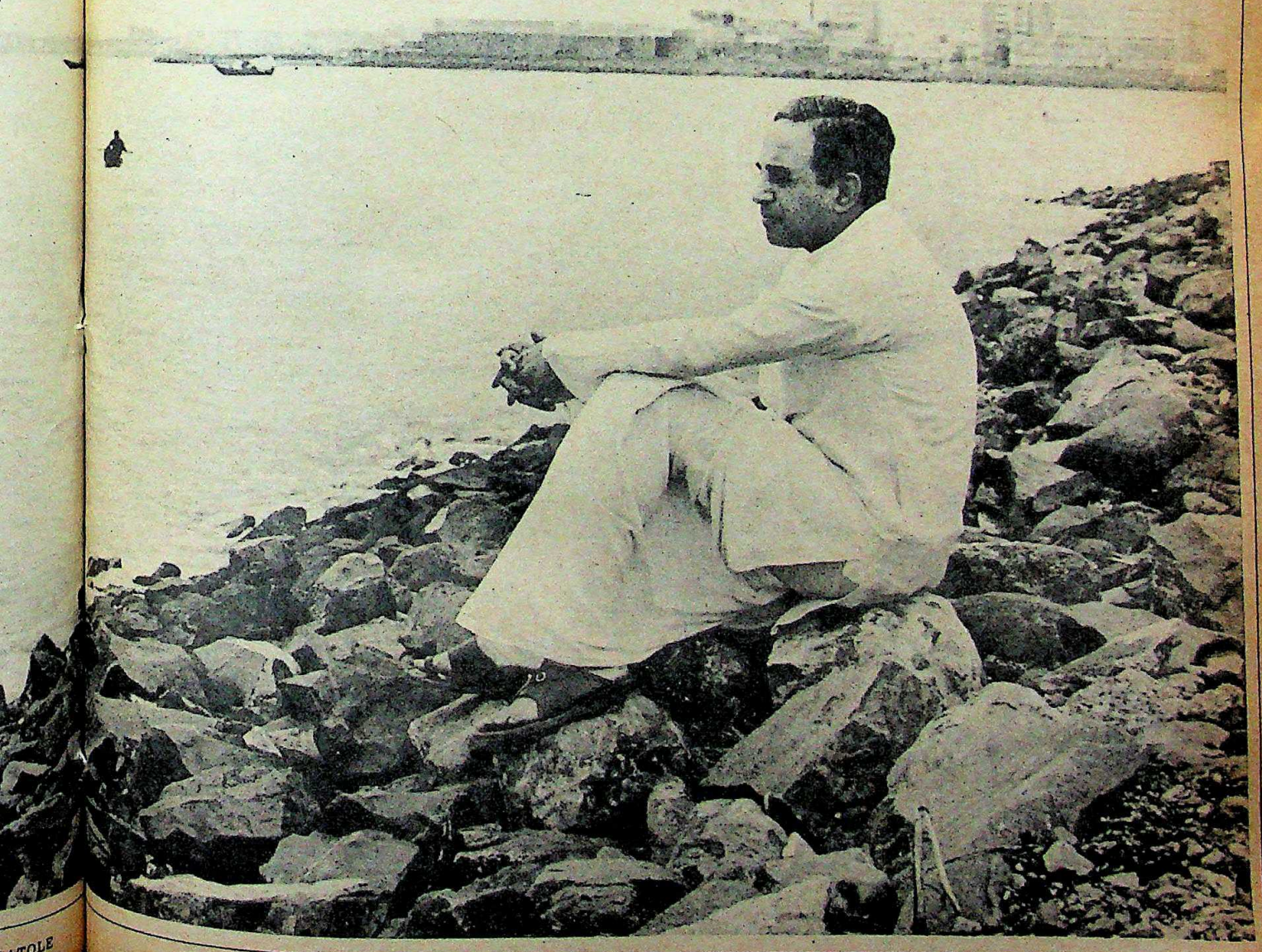
Would Be PM

after all, during the period when the Gandhis were in opposition.) I put forward other objections, but Swamy disregarded them all. Finally, I gave in and simply put the quote into the article. Predictably, it was picked up by other magazines and newspapers and requoted again and again, usually, partly in jest.

I remember the incident because it seemed to me to reveal something about the man. Throughout the interview he had been urbane, charming, witty and sparkling. At times he would sound like the Harvard professor he once was, and at others, he would seem as Indian as the *dhoti-kurtas* he always wears. But there were some things that he would not joke about and when they were discussed, his eyes took on the sort of pallor that bad novelists call 'a steely glint'.

Mrs Gandhi was one such subject: "She is an evil woman. She had me thrown out of my job at the IIT." Atal Behari Vajpayee was another: "He is an immoral hypocrite." And of course, his own career was the third: "Sharad Pawar may not take me seriously, but the people of India do."

At the time, Swamy was still best known for his Emergency escapades and his brilliant Harvard career. He was, the sceptics said, a man with a glorious future *behind* him. Over the next four years I was to follow his career with interest. He took to abusing Vajpayee in public, turned his back on his RSS mentors, and as Deputy Leader of the Janata Party, maintained the outspokenness that one usually associates with highly-strung backbenchers. As he shifted from the old Jana Sangh group into the newly emaciated Janata Party in 1980, he struck me as being a man who would never really belong in any Indian party. His views were too unconventional, he was



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unwilling to accept the restrictions of party discipline, had no respect for the electoral alliances preferred by old-style politicians and retained still, the feeling that he was destined to get to the top.

But of one thing, there was no doubt: contrary to what the sceptics had predicted in 1979, Subramaniam Swamy had not faded away.

* * *

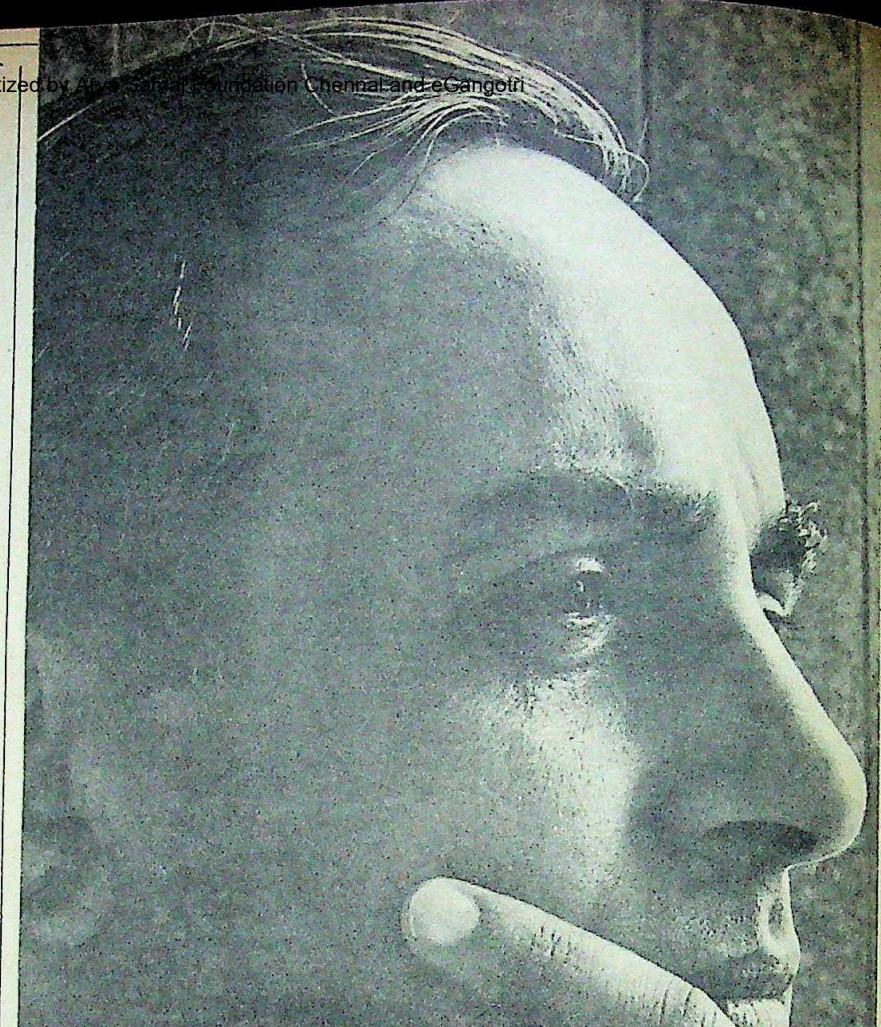
SWAMY STILL BELIEVES that he will be Prime Minister by 1989. If the possibility that he might not meet his own deadline has occurred to him, he gives no sign of it in public. There are still some things that he will not joke about (though Vajpayee seems to have now overtaken Mrs Gandhi as Public Enemy Number One in his estimation) and, to his credit, he has displayed an ideological consistency that is rare in Indian politics.

"What you must realise about me," he notes without a trace of modesty or arrogance, "is that I would consider myself as a phenomenon. After all, what is my background? My family didn't contribute anything to politics. I have no caste or religious appeal. I have built up whatever appeal I have purely on the basis of ideas."

There is substance to this claim. Though he is a brahmin from Tamil Nadu, his Lok Sabha constituency is in Bombay and he is not widely perceived as being a South Indian politician or a brahmin leader. Moreover, he has also not entered politics through any of the usual channels—trade unionism, student activism or district politics. He is perhaps the only Indian politician who stood for elections only after he had earned his PhD and an impressive reputation as an academic. In a sense, he is the first successful politician to emerge from the urban middle class.

Swamy was brought up in Delhi, where his father was a government official and studied at Hindu College and the Indian Statistical Institute in Calcutta. He won a scholarship to Harvard where he first read for a PhD and then became an Associate Professor of Economics.

He came back to India in 1969 to take up an appointment as Professor of Economics with Special Reference to China at the Delhi School of Economics. According to him, BN Gangully, the Vice Chancellor who had invited him was replaced by KN Raj who



"Eight RAW agents were sent to England to bump me off. If it proved too difficult to abduct me, then they had instructions to kill me."

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withheld the appointment. "Partly, it was ideological," he says. "It was a time when leftists like PN Haksar, Mohan Kumaramangalam and Raj himself were very influential and I was not perceived as being left-wing enough for them." There was also the matter of his youth: he was just 29 and too young to be a full professor by Indian standards.

Nevertheless, Swamy's economic credentials were impressive. He had written an influential article on *The Theory Of Index Numbers* with Paul Samuelson in the *American Economic Review* and was the author of a highly-regarded book on the economic growth of China and India. So, he managed quite easily to obtain an appointment as full professor at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi.

His political views at the time were, he recalls, a mixture of strong nationalism and anti-Americanism. "I had been in America during the anti-Vietnam War movement and was opposed to their foreign policy. At that time, India was going round with a begging bowl asking for aid and we had been forced to devalue our currency. It was quite a humiliating time for India. And then I would see all these second-rate American academics coming to India and posing as experts."

In keeping with his views, his first major magazine piece (in *Blitz*) was called *India Can Produce Nuclear Weapons*. A scholarly version of this article appeared in the *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)* and caused quite a stir. Another paper (later published as *Indian Economic Planning—An Alternative Approach* by Vikas) argued that a growth rate of ten per cent was attainable without any foreign aid whatsoever.

Such unconventional ideas made him unpopular among his colleagues but attracted a sort of fan following among students. Later, Swamy began to take an active part in the Institute's Senate and took to attacking RN Dogra, the IIT's Director. He recalls the dispute in good-guys-and-communists terms, maintaining that: "The communists were getting jealous of me and started calling me a CIA agent. They wanted me out." For whatever reason, he was dismissed in 1972. He challenged the dismissal and the case is still before the courts. No other jobs were forthcoming because he claims, "The communist network had decided to keep me out."

GIVEN HIS STRONG nationalism and slightly paranoid reaction to communists, it was not surprising that the Jana Sangh sought him out. Manoharlal Sondhi and Jagannathrao Joshi approached him for help in formulating the Party's economic policies. Like many other Indians of his generation and background, he had been brought up to be suspicious of the RSS and the Jana Sangh. "To this day," he notes, "my own father is strongly opposed to the RSS and I had heard of the fascist tendencies of the organisation." Moreover, he was not a particularly religious Hindu (his wife is a Parsi) and had developed a hatred of the caste system and some other Hindu institutions.

Why then did he join the Jana Sangh? His detractors say that he was on the make and that in his quest for recognition, he was not above an unprincipled alliance or two. Predictably, Swamy does not see it that way: "At that time I was so anti-communist that I was impressed by any organisation that could fight communism. The problem with fascist organisations is that as long as they are for you, you don't see the fascist tendencies. And the Jana Sangh wooed me like they would woo a baby." His economic views became official party policy and he spent the two years (1972-74) after his dismissal from the IIT, helping the party. "During this period I would support myself by going back to Harvard and lecturing for two months and then coming back to Delhi and living off that money for the rest of the year," he remembers.

In 1974, Swamy was asked to go and help with the Jana Sangh's campaign for the UP Assembly Elections. The campaign was a success and he was rewarded with a Rajya Sabha ticket. After two years of unemployment, he now had a new job.

To begin with, Swamy enjoyed being an MP. The Delhi magazine *New Age* heralded his entry into Parliament with a lead story claiming that he was an RSS-sponsored rival to Vajpayee. His own dramatic utterances ensured that he received wide publicity and he continued to write for several magazines and papers.

It took just six months however, for things to start going wrong. "My performance was so good," he says in that flat, matter-of-fact tone, "that I attracted more attention than Vajpayee. So, he started freezing me out. I was asked to cut down on my publicity, I was not informed of decisions, they wouldn't tell me when meetings were held and Vajpayee started telling other politicians to ignore me."

On May 1, 1975, Swamy went to see RSS chief Balasaheb Deoras in Madras. "I want to resign," he told him. "This is not the party for me." Deoras asked him not to be too hasty. "I'll be in Delhi in July and we'll work things out then."

But by June 1975, the situation had changed more dramatically than either of them had anticipated.

* * *

THOUGH SWAMY IS DISMISsive of the Sanjay Gandhi parallels, both were *kurta*-clad children of the Emergency. Like Sanjay, Swamy had acquired a certain reputation in Delhi but was unknown to the country at large. The Emergency changed all that.

When the warrant for his arrest was issued, Swamy was tipped off and went underground at once. He hid in Bombay till January 1976 when he shifted to Madras. At the time, Tamil Nadu was governed by the DMK and he was able to board a plane to Colombo from Madras airport. From Colombo he went on to London and launched a campaign of active opposition to the Emergency.

At one stage, he was getting so much publicity in the Western press that, he claims, the government of India tried to have him killed. "I got a tip off that eight RAW agents had been sent to England to bump me off. I was informed that they had been told to kidnap me and bring me to India and that if this proved too difficult, to kill me." According to Swamy, the attempt came sooner than he expected. "I was walking along a street in Leicester when a brand new car with four Indians inside it stopped. Two of its occupants came out and acted as though they wanted to shake my hand. I raised an alarm at once and they rushed off. Otherwise, they would have dragged me into the car. I had noted the car number and so the British police were able to arrest the men. They all had Malawi passports and claimed to supply bread to the Indian High Commission for a living. The car had been bought two days before, which is normal in such cases. But because I had no proof that they wanted to abduct me, the police releas-

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MY ECONOMIC VIEWS

How to cut taxes and increase growth.

WHEN I ENTERED politics in the early '70s, I had already propounded and published my thesis on the economic philosophy. I had argued (see my *Indian Economic Planning–An Alternative Approach*, Vikas, 1971) then that India could grow at ten per cent per year as against 3.5 per cent per year that our planning had achieved. I also had shown that India could do without foreign aid, produce nuclear weapons and go slow on family planning and yet achieve a near tripling of the growth rate in national income.

The recipe for the fast-growth-cum-self-reliance, in its basic ingredients, has relevance today, a decade later. In the last ten years we have continued at the snail's pace of 3.5 per cent per year, with more massive doses of foreign aid from the World Bank and the IMF. The question is, why?

The fundamental feature of the Indian economy today is that it is shackled by regulations which are cumbersome, arbitrary and contradictory. Many of these regulations are anti-growth and create disincentives which are damaging to economic progress. As a consequence, there has emerged a class of pirates, adventurers and kulaks who are threatening the very concept of industrialisation and agricultural modernisation. The planning priorities have been subverted by this New Class to render our Five-Year plans directionless, in fact shapeless.

Thanks to these ill-founded regulations, especially taxation and licensing, it has become more profitable now to consume than to save and more profitable to accumulate capital without realising output from it (witness the unprecedented rise in the capital-output ratio from 1.8 in 1952 to 6.1 today). Further, it is now more profitable to evade taxes than to pay them. The probability of detecting and the consequent confiscation, has been steadily declining with the rising corruption in the tax departments as also due to the increasing dependence of political parties on the evaded incomes, namely black money. Our planning premisses have thus gone haywire.

My basic premiss is that the Indian people are highly intelligent and property-conscious. Due to the influence of religion, they have a social conscience as well. Therefore, social good can be achieved only by providing proper incentives and appealing to their religious duty. Any system that tries to force the Indian people against their inherited values would be subverted by them but not obeyed. So it is a hopeless task to have a command economy with detailed directives on what is and what is not public good, emanating from New Delhi. Unwilling Indians will manipulate and subvert it.

Instead, the best economic system for India is a market economy with easy-to-understand guidelines serving as rules of the game between consumers and producers. The role of the Government should be that of headmaster in a school, intervening to provide the infrastructure and impartially punishing the offenders of the game rules. Thus Government should provide railways, telephones, roadways, with finance and marketing facilities. It should unerringly punish economic offenders.

In order that consumers and producers play according to the just rules of the game, the Government has a definite responsibility to prevent the growth of monopoly. While I subscribe to this responsibility, I do not approve of the present method of doing it because it simply does not work. During the last two decades, despite all the hot speeches against Birlas and Tatas in Parliament, their assets have grown at the rate of 17 per cent per year.

The key to the defeat of monopoly lies in cost-cutting small industries and not in governmental monopolies commissions. Most of our monopoly houses are over-capitalised, and hence produce at high cost. If a network of small industries is fostered with marketing and finance support from Government, then the monopoly houses would lose out in the ensuing competition. The present system of licensing with the usual loopholes are being actually manipulated by the large houses to prevent competition and cost-cutting.

In my economic philosophy, the two main goals are low prices and full employment. I would use the taxation system and planning priorities to achieve these two goals. In particular, income tax which merely provides four per cent of the Government revenue should be abolished. Excise taxes should be grossly simplified and should not be levied on small industries' products. This would lower prices.

Full employment can be achieved by developing the concept of district industrial centres, by giving priority interest to agro-industries and supplementing it with governmental programmes such as food-for-work, massive projects of highway road construction and adult education. The educational system should be so geared that a young boy or girl after leaving secondary school or college goes straight to a bank in a district industrial centre and can organise a small industry under his or her management.

The same principle I would adopt for the peasantry. Those who own land should be able to organise themselves through bank credit and be able to market their produce in Government-provided centres. And those who do not own land should be able to progressively shift to small industries.

The core of my economic philosophy is my faith in the native intelligence and enterprise of the Indian. This faith comes after seeing Indians perform in the West, Middle East, Africa and Hong Kong. If the Indian is not performing in India, it is because he is not allowed to. My philosophy thus envisages removing the clamps on him and regulating his behaviour within broad easy-to-understand rules. If my philosophy is adopted, India will be a giant economic power in a 15-year period.

— Subramaniam Swamy

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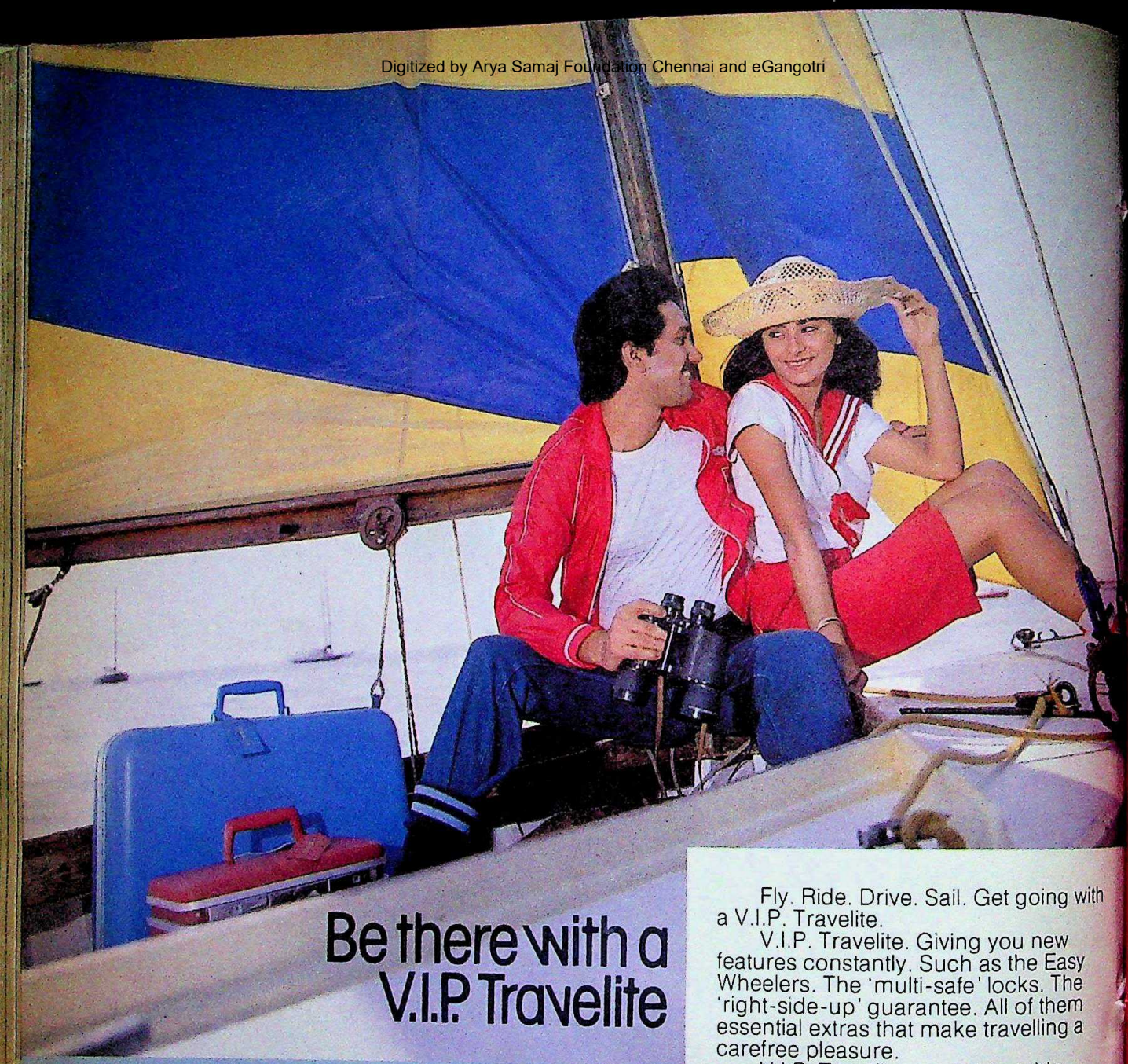

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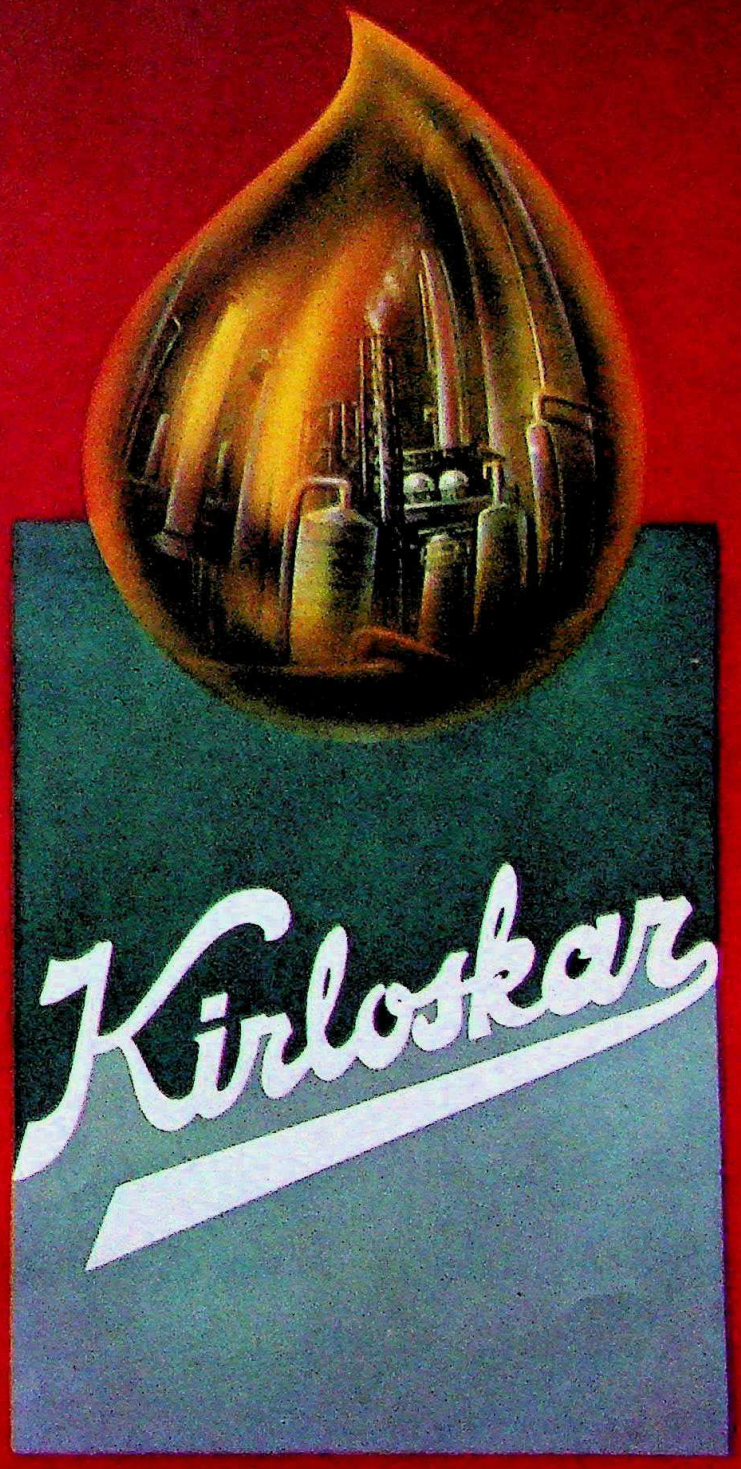
Many industries depend on this symbol



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ed them."

This incident went unreported, but Swamy's dramatic re-appearance in India caused a national sensation. On August 10, 1976, he suddenly turned up in the Rajya Sabha, addressed the chairman and then disappeared again. Because he managed to evade all the security services who were then looking for him, it was an amazing feat. It proved that Mrs Gandhi's police force was unable to keep a check on the activities of the anti-Emergency underground movement.

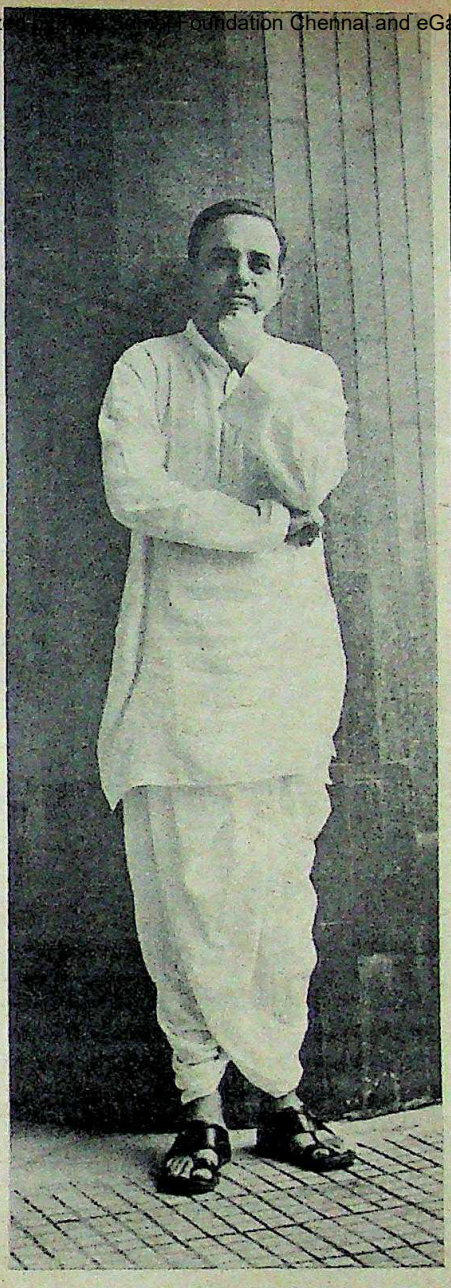
As Swamy tells it, the re-entry into India was easy. "I bought a London-Bangkok ticket and got off at Delhi. Instead of staying in the transit lounge, I strolled out, displaying my Rajya Sabha pass. Nobody even tried to stop me!" He escaped again by driving across the Nepal border. "It was very good for the morale of opponents of the Emergency," he recalls, "though Vajpayee of course asked me to surrender. He felt that by re-entering the country, I had caused Mrs Gandhi to feel that the removal of the Emergency would be too dangerous for her. Vajpayee had cracked up but it is true that Mrs Gandhi was shaken. CM Stephen once told me that he went to meet Mrs Gandhi the day after I had attended the Rajya Sabha and she was in pieces. She kept saying, 'What security is there if he can just walk in and out?' So I think my return had a great impact."

Swamy had always believed that Mrs Gandhi would call elections in 1977, though he thought that she would wait till November. So, he was not surprised when the government withdrew press censorship, released leaders from prison and dissolved Parliament. "I wanted to stand from New Delhi but Vajpayee called and said that he wanted to contest from there. Fortunately, the Bombay seat was available and I had some links with the city because my wife's family lives here."

As is now well-known, Swamy got elected on the Janata wave of 1977, defeating trade unionist and Congress candidate Raja Kulkarni.

* * *

SWAMY'S TERM AS A JANATA MP began badly. On March 27, 1977, he told Ian Jack of the *Sunday Times* (London) that he didn't think Janata would last for more than two years. The party's National Executive reprimanded him but he was not to be repressed. Asked by the press if he would accept a cabinet berth, he said, "Well, I'm not going to agree to be Minister for Civil Aviation," making it clear that he would only accept Home, Finance or External Affairs. To nobody's great surprise, none of these ministries was offered to him.



He called Vajpayee an immoral hypocrite, an incorrigible womaniser and a heavy drinker.

Later he called Jawaharlal Nehru 'a very corrupt man', demanded the abolition of the special status the Constitution granted Kashmir and made many other sensational statements that hit the front pages with a predictable regularity (among them was the claim that the Janata cabinet contained several drunkards—Swamy is a teetotaller).

Because he lacked any official position and because his reputation still rested on his Emergency escapades, Swamy soon earned notoriety as a publicity-seeker. Terms like 'court-jester' and 'clown prince' began to be applied to him by the press and one magazine even called him 'Raj Narain with a Harvard degree'. By October 1977, matters had got to the stage where the Party was seriously considering expelling him. Recalls Swamy: "Vajpayee organised an expulsion. All these characters—Chandrashekhar, George Fernandes, Madhu Limaye and others—went along with it. They would have expelled me for indiscipline had Morarji not put his foot down.

"I asked Chandrashekhar why he had done it. He said, 'Look, Vajpayee is the leader of your Jana Sangh group. If he felt you should be expelled, then why should we stop him?' That made me realise that I had to oppose Vajpayee who was getting extremely jealous of my prominence."

For most of 1978, Swamy seemed to concentrate on opposing Vajpayee. He attacked Janata foreign policy, went to China before Vajpayee could do so and began to speak disparagingly of the Foreign Minister's morals. He now says that he was fighting for his own survival. "Vajpayee is a past master of intrigue, so I had to smoke him out and fight the battle in the open. Otherwise, he would have finished me."

Swamy's controversial statements and his prolific journalistic output (he has written for *Sunday*, *India Today*, *The Illustrated Weekly* and *Onlooker*) made him famous. By 1979, he was as well-known as Chandrashekhar or

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INTERVIEW:

"I SAY WHAT I THINK IS RIGHT"

Vajpayee : "immoral hypocrite".

Imprint: ***Is it in good taste to continually attack Vajpayee's personal life?***

Swamy: He is a hypocrite. He is a man who has been posing as a *brahmachari* who has given up the joys of life and is suffering for the nation. It is his hypocrisy I object to, not the fact that he enjoys himself. I have my disagreements with Chandrashekhar but I never mention his private life—and it is not that I don't know. But he is not a hypocrite.

Even during the Emergency, most of the RSS people told me, if Vajpayee is allowed to meet you, he will convey your whereabouts to the police! That is the extent of Vajpayee's meanness. He is a cad and a coward who should not be allowed to occupy high office.

Many politicians regard you as they would a mosquito. That is to say, you have a certain nuisance value but one swat, and you are finished.

Yes that's right. I am a man who is rootless, who doesn't go and pay his respects to these politicians and they think I can be snuffed out. But they've learned the hard way that it is not so easy to deal with me. Recently there have even been offers of a peace treaty from Vajpayee's people.

What about the persistent rumour that you are joining Mrs Gandhi?

Vajpayee's people started it and as a consequence, my relations with Mrs Gandhi have improved (laughs). I can never join Mrs Gandhi because I have made my reputation in this country opposing her. If I join her, my credibility is finished. I'll cease to be a man of firm ideas.

As somebody who has seen it from the inside, what do you think is the relationship between the BJP or Jana Sangh and the RSS?

The relationship of the power-house and the bulb, or the body and the brain. You can't separate them. In the final analysis, the BJP will do what the RSS tells it to. So all of the RSS's prejudices will appear in the BJP's actions.

You are not just saying this because you've fallen out with them?

No, I've always said this. In October 1979, I wrote an article in *The Illustrated Weekly* in which I said that all larger decisions taken by the Jana Sangh/BJP group are a sham. The RSS takes the decisions in a small conclave and then the BJP endorses them. Either you accept it or you don't. But to pretend that you can separate the two is futile or hypocritical.

In that case, why did you join the Jana Sangh in the first place?

I didn't know about it. I entered the Jana Sangh in 1974 and tried to leave in 1975, and the Emergency was declared a month after that. When I returned to India, I was a member of the Janata Party, not the Jana Sangh.

What was it about the identity of the post-1980 Janata Party that made you want to stay in it? And does it have an identity now?

I was one of the few people who said that the emaciated Janata could survive. In May 1980, Chandrashekhar talked to me about liquidating the party. In fact, they called a conference of 100 intellectuals, hoping to create a new party.

The identity of Janata has to be that it is a centrist party. Its thrust cannot be leftist. If at all it leans, it leans to the right.

Why?

Because that is how the party was conceived in 1977. The kind of things we did in the 1977 to 1979 period—decontrol of sugar, abolition of the P Form etc—proved this. A Gandhian framework means a rightist thrust. We must encompass a broad coalition.

Now the time has come to do radical things. If I was in charge, I would abolish income tax for five years and dismantle all the controls.

But you know as well as I do that the Janata is not going to do that. You are in a minority of one in the party.

I think that time changes things. People change their minds. There was a time when Chandrashekhar was issuing certificates to Mrs Gandhi for

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Chandrashekhar : "great stamina".

her progressive ideas! I have full faith that as younger people enter the Janata we will dispense with the sham of state capitalism that we call socialism.

How serious are your differences with Chandrashekhar?

Not very serious but Chandrashekhar is a man who is easily influenced by rumours and once he hears something, he tends to believe it.

Then, he has a short temper and says something that will provoke me. So, I retaliate. I never, never take anything lying down. If I wanted to do that, I'd have remained a professor. In fact, today I can get a professorship anywhere. If I told Mrs Gandhi that I was giving up politics and wanted a professorship, she would happily give me two (laughs).

But no, Chandrashekhar and I have no fundamental differences.

But you do, surely? In ideological terms, I can't think of two things you agree on. In terms of personal style too, you are very different.

Yes, but I don't think of him as evil. He's not mean and vapid like Sharad Pawar and Vajpayee. These are people who don't deserve to occupy high positions. Chandrashekhar and I make up if we fight. At the moment, we have a peace treaty!

But what do you have in common with the other members of your party? And isn't there a moral issue involved when you link up with a man like George Fernandes who you've attacked for toppling the Janata government?

Well, I'm sorry. I was in a minority on this. I was told that the fact that people like Fernandes have rejoined unconditionally shows that they regret their behaviour. There is also a feeling in the country that we should all unite again. I was told that people like Karpoori Thakur, Devi Lal and Biju Patnaik have electoral bases of their own and that we had to take them all together or not at all. My own view is that it was a mistake. But I am willing to let 1985 be the last experiment of this kind of politics. And then I will decide that enough is enough.

Right now I'm not in a position to do much. I could quit and form another party but that would not be right. The mood in the country is not in favour of it.

***What did you think of Chandrashekhar's* padayatra?**

Well, I had expressed myself against the misutilisation of time that it involved. We told him in the National Executive meeting that if at the end of the *yatra*, he went back to doing what he was doing earlier, it meant that he just wanted to attract some publicity. The only thing I would say about the *padayatra* is that it was an act of great stamina (laughs).

In six months, with a car, he would have got the same affection of the people.

Fernandes : "regrets his behaviour".

Sharad Pawar : "mean and vapid".

It has been said that there is a hysterical edge to some of your pronouncements.

Well, it depends on how it comes out in cold print. Something that I say lightly to a journalist may seem hysterical when it is put down.

Nevertheless, would it be fair to say that you are readier to criticise your colleagues than any other Indian politician?

Well, I got into politics because of different motives. I am not a usual politician. I say what I think is right, I do not submit to discipline and I fight every inch of the way.

I believe that in India you can get very far if you don't worry about consequences. Few of our politicians speak their minds because they are scared of causing offence.

If I couldn't say what I believed, then I wouldn't remain in politics. ♦

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Charan Singh—not bad going for a man who had only entered politics four years before. He says now that he realised that Janata was not going to last and therefore concentrated on building up a national following. He toured the country repeatedly and visited nearly every part of India.

He was fortunate that he had won Morarji Desai's confidence. The way he tells it, Morarji invited him to 1, Safdarjang Road in May 1977 and lectured him on party discipline. Swamy was able to convince him that he was not working against the interests of the party and the two became good friends. Later when Vajpayee, Advani and other Janata leaders attacked Swamy, Morarji shielded him.

Nevertheless, the impression persisted that Swamy was a lightweight, a political nonentity ("Who takes him seriously?" Sharad Pawar asked in early 1980) who would soon be forgotten. An opinion poll conducted by the Indian Market Research Bureau for *Bombay* magazine in late 1979 predicted that he would hang on to his parliamentary seat in the 1980 elections by a slim margin. As it turned out, Swamy won by a huge majority of 40,000 and went on to become Deputy Leader of the Janata Party.

* * *

"THERE IS A SILENT demographic revolution in this country that people are not understanding. Seventy per cent of the electorate today is under the age of 40 and if you can mobilise them if you can excite them, then you don't need anything like the old electoral calculations." Subramaniam Swamy is as articulate today as he was in his 'outspoken' phase four years ago. Then, I had wondered about the cold, hard ambition behind the sensational statements. Now, the ambition is out in the open and the sensationalism has been toned down somewhat. If provoked, Swamy will still make the odd controversial statement but it is easier to get him to talk about electoral strategy.

Unlike many of his comrades in the Janata Party, he does not see politics solely in terms of personalities. Unlike them, he also has an unusually shrewd grasp of what is happening in India today. Just as he gave the 1977-brand Janata two years, he seems willing to give this Janata *avatar* the period between now and the next General Election.

When he talks of a demographic revolution, he gives the impression of having thought deeply about electoral behaviour. He knows that of the 70 per cent of the population below 40, at least 60 per cent are below 35. Such voters are relatively uninfluenced by caste loyalties and have little or no recollection of the Nehru era. They are more interested in a party that makes its policies clear and then acts on them. At 44, Swamy is the only politician from his generation to have reached a position of prominence in national politics. His Janata, BJP and Lok Dal counterparts are all members of a different generation (Chandrashekhar is 56, Vajpayee: 57 and Charan Singh: 81). Even if he lets the 1985 elections go by, Swamy will still be only 50 in 1990.

Till then he is biding his time. Despite his attempts at rationalisation (see interview), he is clearly a misfit in Janata just as he was in the Jana Sangh. He concedes that he could not have continued with the Jana Sangh: "They only value loyalty. There is no room for individual points of view." And he insists that he stuck with Janata rather than join the BJP in 1980 because he thought that the erstwhile Jana Sanghis were going back on their word. (At least one journalist though, remembers Swamy saying to him in 1980: "If I join the BJP, Vajpayee will make *kheema* of me.")

About Janata, he is more brazen: "There is room for all points of view." This claim sits uneasily with the fact that the 'progressive' views of Chandrashekhar and the erstwhile socialists clash completely with his own right-wing beliefs. If he had his way for example, he would abolish income tax, a view that is hardly likely to have them cheering in the aisles at meetings of the Janata National Executive.

* * *

SWAMY'S ABILITY TO HIT the headlines, almost at will, is both his greatest asset and his biggest liability. Had he not been so outspoken, so willing to shoot his mouth off at the slightest provocation, he would probably not be as well-known as he is today.

On the other hand, it is because he is so articulate, that he is so often perceived as being glib and superficial. Controversy has made him famous, but it has also made him slightly suspect in the eyes of many of his colleagues. The nagging feeling that he is no more than a clown, a man without political standing who inflates his own importance by attacking the few politicians who do matter, will not go away. There is a hysterical edge to some of his pronouncements and his readiness to ruin reputations at the drop of a *topi* suggests a certain immaturity. He would like to be called 'irrepressible', but he is often seen as irresponsible.

Swamy's detractors generally fall into two groups. There are those who feel that he is of no consequence, a mere newspaper tiger; and then there are those who feel that even if he is to be taken seriously, there is simply no prospect of his getting anywhere. His principle political mentor, Morarji Desai is 88 and embroiled in problems of his own. His old friends in the BJP and the RSS see him as a traitor and his colleagues in the Janata party disagree with him on nearly every issue. Should Janata win the next election, they argue, it is possible that he may not even be offered the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

The first criticism is easily disposed of. He can be glib, irresponsible and even slightly hysterical. In the Indian context, these qualities are not unusual. Anybody who remembers the performance of the last Janata government where ministers called each other KGB agents and dangerous lunatics, cannot honestly be surprised by Swamy's volubility. That this necessarily makes him a clown does not follow. He is perhaps the only member of the Janata National Executive to have clearly defined economic views (which appear elsewhere in this issue) and his articles on Foreign Policy display a rare perceptiveness. Unfortunately for him, Indian politics tends not to be about issues and when the papers do feature him, it is as a loudmouth, not as a thinker.

It is the second criticism that has greater validity. Even if he is not a clown, will he ever amount to much, given the structure of Indian politics?

Swamy is certain that he will. The key to his confidence lies in his belief that India is changing far more rapidly than the older generation of politicians realises. He points out that the pundits have got the results of every election held in the last ten years wrong. The gradual change in the age structure of the population ('the demographic re-

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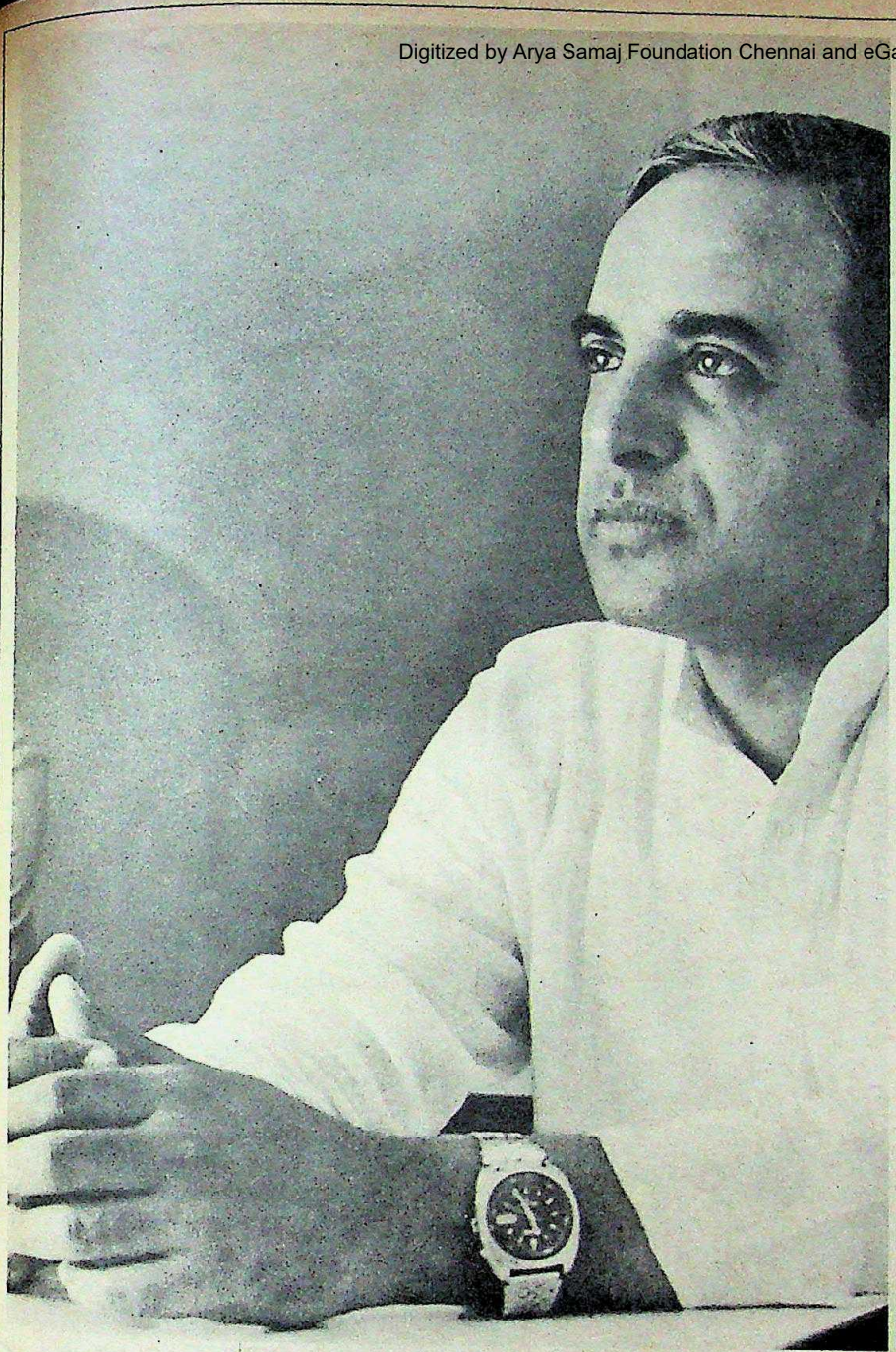

At 44, Swamy is the only politician from his generation to have reached a position of prominence in national politics. Chandrashekhar is 56, Vajpayee: 57 and Charan Singh: 81.

volution' he often talks about) will render the conventional political wisdom obsolete. The violent electoral swings that we have recently witnessed indicate just how dissatisfied the people are with the existing structure of politics.

He backs this analysis with personal observation. "I don't publicise this but I have been addressing public meetings all over the country and I can sense the change in public mood. I was the first Janata politician to address a meeting in Patna's Gandhi Maidan after 1977 and it was the biggest crowd Patna had seen for some time. In Jamshedpur, I drew a crowd of 25,000 which is a lot for Jamshedpur. People want politicians who talk about issues and seem capable of doing what they promise."

He is dismissive of suggestions that without a political base, his position will always seem insecure. "Not at all. The worst thing a national leader can do is find a regional base. Mrs Gandhi has so much national standing because she is not perceived as a UP politician. On the other hand, Charan Singh will always speak for the Jats and Jagjivan Ram for the scheduled castes. Once you do that, all the other castes and communities become suspicious of you. I keep telling Chandrashekhar not to let people call him a Rajput leader."

In some ways, Swamy is still a very urban politician. His unwillingness to be associated with any region or caste, his open contempt for the hypocritical excesses of old-style politicians and his insistence on producing a clear statement of beliefs are the mark of an educated, young person from a large city who is disgusted by the existing state of Indian politics. His views too are the sort that most elite or middle-class people in Bombay, Delhi or Madras would agree with—less taxation, fewer economic controls and a distrust of Russia.

It is his view that because he is the first person from this sort of background to gain political prominence, he will always be perceived as a misfit. But there is no doubt that as India becomes more urban, as the literacy rate goes up and as the population gets younger, he will not seem so unusual.

"That should happen by 1989," Swamy laughs. "And I'll become Prime Minister before my deadline expires!"

— Vir Sanghvi

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THE AVENGERS

The inside story of Bombay's recent gang wars.

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By Amrita Shah

NOTHING COULD HAVE been further from Shabir Ibrahim's thoughts than his impending death.

It was February 1981 and things were going well. The smuggling trade was paying handsomely and he and his brother Dawood were forever turning away offers of fresh work. Their office at Musafirkhana Building in Bombay's Bohri Mohallah was overflowing with visitors and together, the two of them had stashed away nearly four crore rupees.

But that night, on February 11, as he drove his white Premier Padmini through the Opera House area, Shabir had more than just business on his mind. At 11.30 pm he was due at Chowpatty beach to meet somebody quite special.

Chitra was a *mujra* dancer. Normally she performed only for select customers in her *kotha* near the Kennedy Bridge. But Shabir had influence. He'd spoken to Nanda about it and she had promised to arrange a rendezvous. Once upon a time Nanda would have turned him down flat or else, risked the wrath of Amirzada, her *goonda* boyfriend. But now, Shabir and Amirzada had made up and Nanda was only too willing to help. Chitra was a friend of hers and if Shabir was interested, anything could be arranged.

Nanda kept her word. When Shabir's Padmini drove up to Chowpatty, Chitra and she climbed in. Turning the car around, Shabir drove them all to Nariman Point for a late night fruit juice. Nanda drank her juice and then did the discreet thing. Would Shabir be kind enough to drop her home, she asked. She was sure he'd want to be alone with Chitra.,

It was what Shabir had expected. The juices were consumed, he began the long drive to Worli where Nanda lived. After that he would take Chitra to Juhu where he had arranged for a room for the night.

By the time they got to Worli, Bombay had gone to sleep. The streets were deserted and the pedestrians had all gone home. Only a black Ambassador bedecked with rows of flowers remained on the road. A marriage party returning from an evening's revelry thought Shabir.

He did not think it odd when the Ambassador fell in behind them after they had dropped Nanda. Even when he noticed that he was out of petrol, he did not realise that something was amiss. Shabir always kept his fuel tank full; that way a getaway was assured. But tonight the tank was nearly empty. Nevertheless, he had Chitra for the night and things were, as they say, going well. What could possibly go wrong?

He turned off at Prabhadevi and found the Servocare petrol pump, one of the few stations to be open at that time. He handed the key of the petrol tank to the attendant and turned his attention to Chitra.

At that point, things stopped going well. The black Ambassador screeched to a halt behind Shabir's white Padmini. He swerved his head around to see five armed men come running out. One of them aimed straight for the car and fired.

The revolver bullet shattered the windscreen and hit Shabir. Before he even realised what was happening, a second man had trained a double-barrel shotgun at him and fired. This bullet too, found its target, and Shabir slumped in agony and surprise.

Finally, his blood gushing out of his body, Shabir showed signs of the courage that had made him famous. Staggering out of the car, he grabbed the barrels of the shotgun. "I'll take you bastards with me," he screamed, pain and anger racking his voice.

Those were the last words he ever spoke. A third man whipped out a *kukri* and slashed Shabir's wrist. He lost his grip on the gun and fell. The men stood in a semicircle around his prostrate form and fired nine more bullets into him at point-blank range.

Their work done, the killers rushed back into their 'wedding' car and drove off. A terrified Chitra crawled out of the Padmini and went to Shabir s body.

It was of course, too late. Shabir Ibrahim, daredevil and millionaire, was very dead. He would have been 27 later that year.

* * *

LATER, WHEN SHABIR HAD been buried and they had got over the shock, his associates reconstructed the murder. They knew at once where

Amrita Shah works with Imprint. *Her last article was* Clashes In The PUCL *in October.*

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Shabir had gone wrong. He had trusted Nanda even though he knew that she was Amirzada's girlfriend. Admittedly, Shabir and Amirzada had made up, but their's was a tenuous truce and had Shabir not been so eager for his pleasure, he would have thought more carefully about letting Nanda lead him into a trap.

The wedding flowers on the Ambassador were also a dead giveaway. Not only did they make the car seem innocuous but they also prevented curious passersby from looking through the windows—had Shabir been alert, he would have remembered to be suspicious of the unusual. And finally, there was the matter of his fuel tank. Obviously somebody had drained the petrol out earlier. That alone should have put Shabir on his guard.

But then, if Shabir died because of his over-confidence and recklessness, it was somehow appropriate. He had begun a career of crime by being reckless and only because of his confidence had he been so successful. He lived like a daredevil. And finally, he died like one.

Though his later activities made it difficult to believe, Shabir was the son of a policeman. His father, Ibrahim Haskar was a *havaldar* with the CID who decided, when he retired, that he had learned enough about criminals to become a successful smuggler himself. His sons, Shabir and Dawood inherited their father's criminal instincts. When Shabir was only 16, they opened a stall to sell smuggled goods at Crawford Market and later began to offer protection to smugglers. Gradually, they became big-time smugglers themselves.

Within the Nagpada area in which they lived, they soon earned an impressive reputation for daredevilry. When their brothers Nur Ul Huq, Anees and Abdullah entered the business, they became a mafia-style family with Shabir as the young Don. Despite their criminal activities, they mingled freely with their neighbours and never hurt anyone who was not directly involved in their business. To this day, many law-abiding Nagpada residents speak well of Shabir.

* * *

ADJACENT TO TEMKAR Street where the Ibrahims live, is lane no 5, Kamathipura. And as anybody in Nagpada will tell you, the acknowledged *dada* of lane no 5 was Amirzada.

Amirzada, despite his later pretensions, had humble beginnings. His father Nawab Lala was a domestic servant. Of course he was no mere servant. His employer was Karim Lala, the international smuggler who has somehow become a leader of Bombay's Muslim community and a friend of such celebrities as Dilip Kumar.

Inspired by Karim Lala, Amirzada took to smuggling. He drafted his brother Shahzada and his cousins Alamzeb and Ayub in the business. While their smuggling activities were, to begin with, relatively insignificant, they had more success in the protection racket.

Smugglers require more protection than law-abiding citizens. Their goods are collected by fishing craft from ships that arrive close to the Bombay coastline. The fishing craft are guided to safe landing spots where they unload the cargo. This cargo is then taken to godowns till it can be distributed to the owners of special shops in Mohatta Market at Crawford Market and Gandhi Market in Matunga. Along the way, the cargo is vulnerable. The fishing craft can be hijacked, their unloading interrupted or the trucks carrying the goods to the godown can be robbed.

Amirzada told the smugglers that if they hired him, this fate would not befall their cargoes. He would guarantee their safety and provide protection. Not only did he have his brothers and cousins to assist him but he had also recruited some of the best toughs in the business. There was Ayub Lala, a well-known *goonda*. Then there was Iqbal Tempo, his name deriving from his tendency to bring hit men in a tempo. And of course there was Syed Batla, well-known for his ruthlessness and his apparent ability to go through life without a single human feeling.

Not everyone though, was scared of Amirzada's gang. Iqbal Natiq, a reporter for the Urdu journal *Razdaar* ran a campaign against the gang. Prodded by Natiq's crusading journalism, the Crime Branch arrested Amirzada and his associates in 1976, during the Emergency.

By the summer of 1977 though, the gang was free and eager to teach Natiq a lesson. Amirzada, Alamzeb, Syed Batla and Ayub Lala went to Natiq's house in Bhendi Bazaar. They threatened him with a sword and abducted him. At Khetwadi, the exact spot where they had been arrested, they stabbed Natiq on his legs, arms and

The Attack At The Funeral

Three
bomb
the IB
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grave

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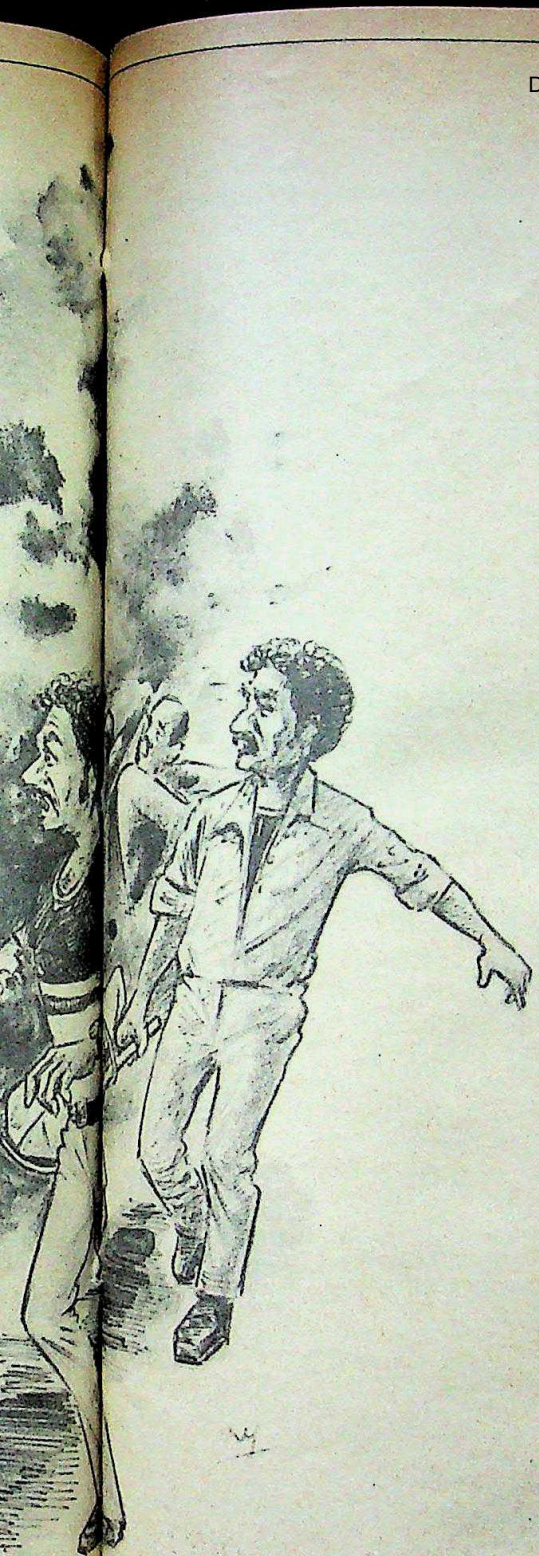

Three homemade bombs exploded as the Ibrahims took the body to the graveyard.

body. With blood pouring from his wounds, they pushed him into marshy land and disappeared.

When the police, alerted by Natiq's family, reached the spot, it was too late. They rushed him to a hospital but his wounds turned gangrenous and he died on August 2, 1977. Enraged, the police picked up the four killers, but a judge released them on bail shortly afterwards.

* * *

IT WAS PROBABLY INEVITable that Amirzada and his family would cross swords with the Ibrahims. For a start, they were in the same business. Both offered protection to smugglers and each claimed that his family was tougher than the other. Then, there was the problem with Natiq. There can be no denying that Natiq was a friend of the Ibrahims, though it has never been established that they put him upto attacking Amirzada. Nevertheless, Amirzada thought that Shabir was behind Natiq and made no secret of his views.

Whether it was resentment at this slur, or whether Shabir thought that he was avenging Natiq, is not known but in late 1977 the Ibrahims took up arms against Amirzada's men.

They singled out Batla for the first attack. He was bathing at his residence when Shabir and Dawood burst through the door along with three henchmen—Mehmood Kalia, Khalid Pahelwan and Anjum. They whipped out swords and lacerated his arms. Then they shot him in the thigh. Their aim was not to kill but to disable.

Inspector Sudhir Jadhav, then of the Nagpada police station, was the first to get to Batla's home. He found Batla sprawled on the bathroom floor, his dismembered fingers ranged around him. His flesh was peeling off like the skin of an over-ripe banana and the flesh was sliced off his arms. He had a bullet in his leg and broken bones everywhere else.

Batla lived, but he lost the use of his hands for life. Characteristically, this did not deter him. He took to wearing iron-capped boots, taught himself karate and learned to defend himself by only using his legs.

From then on though, it was open war between the Ibrahims and Amirzada's men. In one celebrated incident, the gangs met at the Nagpada junction (near the Alexandra cinema) and shot it out, Western-style, with bullets spraying the neighbourhood. Suddenly, the mafia war was front-page news.

It is not surprising that the rest of the criminal fraternity, disturbed by all the publicity, decided to step in. The seven major Dons of Bombay's underworld called a meeting. Haji Mastaan, Karim Lala, Hussain Somji, Jeenabhai Daruwal, Aziz Dilip, Majid Kalia and Hamid Daqi had realised that any more street battles would only lead to calls for stricter law enforcement and damage their operations.

The summit was held at Mastaan's strangely seedy villa on Bombay's winding Sophia College lane. Amirzada and Shabir faced the full wrath of the combined leadership of the underworld. They were told never to fight again and were made to swear on the Koran that they would henceforth live in peace. The oath ended: "If we ever violate this sacred oath, let Allah take our lives."

As part of the compromise, the Ibrahims put pressure on the witnesses in the Natiq case. Two key prosecution witnesses suddenly recanted and Amirzada and Alamzeb were acquitted. Batla and Ayub Lala however, were convicted. Nevertheless peace appeared to have returned to Nagpada. Amirzada and Alamzeb even attended Shabir's wedding.

* * *

IF THE DONS thought that they had ended the Ibrahim-Amirzada rivalry forever, they were mistaken. Amirzada and Alamzeb hired two new hit men, Afzal and Jaffer and resumed their protection rackets. Inevitably, their business interests clashed once more with those of the Ibrahims.

On December 26, 1980, Anees, (one of the Ibrahim brothers) was strolling in Byculla with Mohammed Sahib, a family friend. They were accosted by Amirzada's two new henchmen. Afzal pulled out a knife and stabbed Mohammed while Jaffer fired several shots from his revolver, all of which went wild. Anees fought off the duo who fled but Mohammed had to be hospitalised.

Though Amirzada was not directly involved in the assault, it should have been obvious to the Ibrahims that the hit men were acting on his instructions. However, this did not strike Shabir who as head of the family, made the

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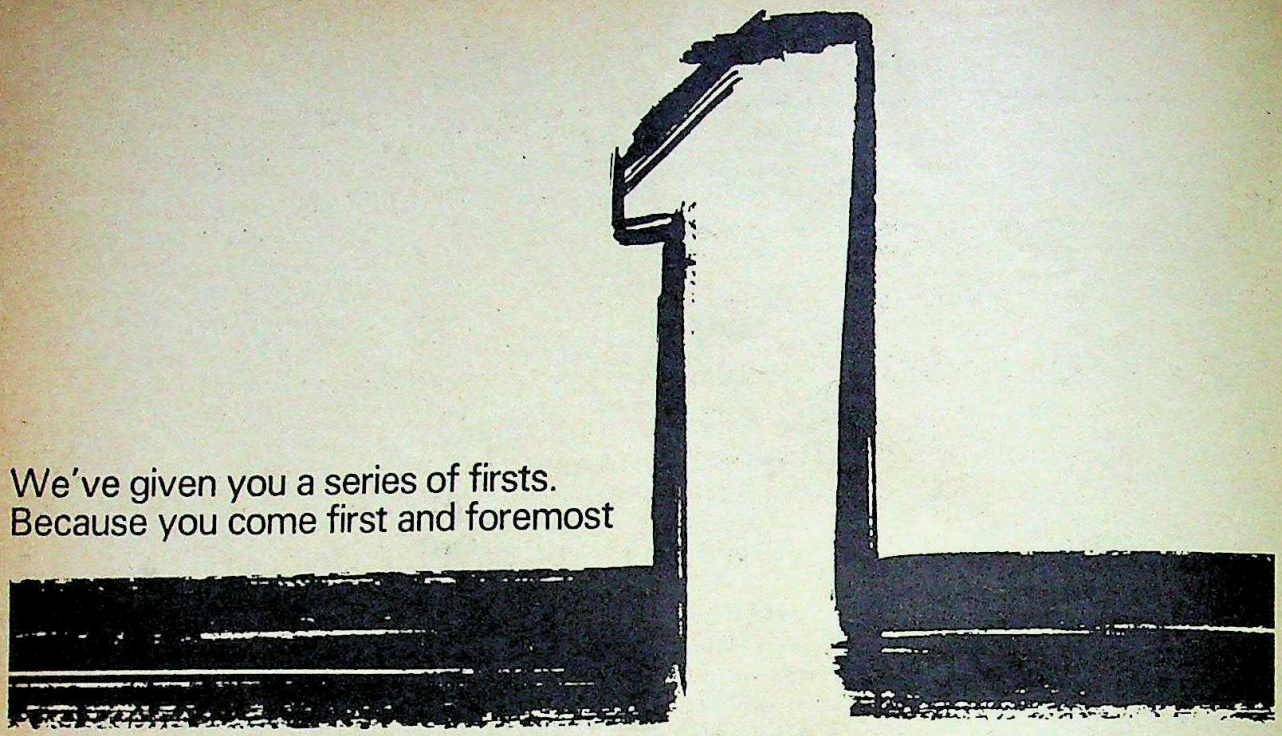

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decisions. He felt that motive was lacking, though their business activities were clearly in conflict. Moreover Nagpada residents also offer another explanation. They claim that at Amirzada's sister's wedding, Shabir was rude to her and Amirzada's gang took it as a mortal slight.

Whatever it was that made Amirzada defy the word of the seven top Dons of the underworld, Shabir did not know it. Otherwise, he would not have been so trusting that February night when Amirzada's girlfriend Nanda led him to his death.

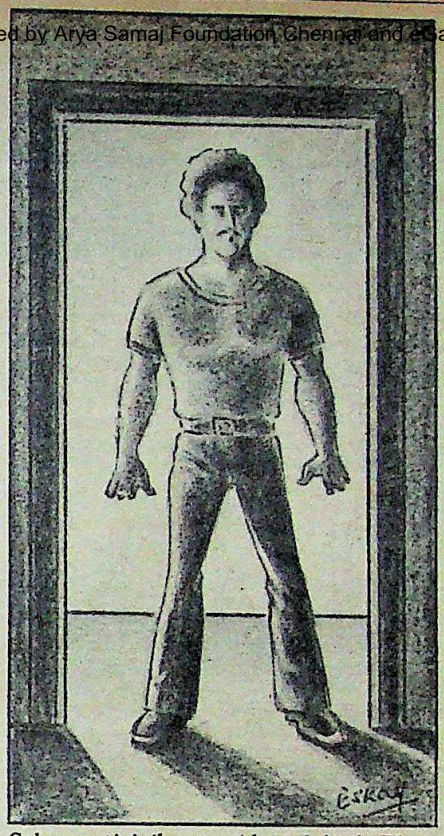
* * *

DAWOOD IBRAHIM BECAME the head of the family after his brother Shabir was murdered. Wisely, he decided to move the family out of the protection racket in Bombay and to try and concentrate on smuggling. He set up a partnership with Lallu Jogi, the king-pin of the smugglers' paradise of Daman. Jogi put him in touch with Haji Ashraf, the 'little sheikh' of Dubai. The three of them formed a most successful partnership. Dawood would use the crores Shabir and he had made in Bombay to pay Haji Ashraf for goods that he would buy in Dubai. Jogi would handle the dirty work of sending fishing craft to collect the contraband from the ships in which Ashraf would dispatch the cargo. It was a scheme that couldn't go wrong.

But go wrong it did, and for the most mundane reasons. Dawood was driving back to Bombay with his henchmen Haji Ismail and Ali Abdul Antulay after meeting Jogi in Daman when Antulay's pistol went off by accident. Dawood was hit on the neck and Ismail on the hand. On June 10, 1983, they were rushed to a Baroda hospital. The police recognised them and arrested all three. When Jogi arrived to help on June 11, 1983, they arrested him too. . .

The Gujarat police, elated by this sudden windfall put the screws on Haji Ismail. After a few days of ceaseless interrogation, he cracked. Yes, he admitted, Dawood was the mastermind of the March 1983 operation during which contraband worth nearly Rs three crores was smuggled into Gujarat and yes, he had forged an alliance with Jogi and Ashraf.

After this confession, Dawood's fate was sealed. The Gujarat police, fearful that he might escape insisted on shifting him to the more secure



Sabarmati jail near Ahmedabad. They put him in an Ambassador under an armed guard on August 2, 1983 and decided to drive to Sabarmati—public transport was not considered safe enough.

As the Ambassador sped past Jamalpur on the highway to Ahmedabad, another car drove up alongside. Before the police could react, its occupants opened fire. Dawood, displaying the survival instinct that Shabir had clearly lacked, ducked. His presence of mind saved his life. While the bullets hit the other passengers of the Ambassador, Dawood emerged unscathed.

At the end of the journey he was still under arrest, but he was alive.

* * *

THE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINation was of course, the work of Amirzada's men. Their leader was due to come up for trial the next month for Shabir's murder and they felt that with Dawood out of the way, witnesses might be persuaded to change their stories.

They kept up the pressure. When one of Dawood's friends died, the entire Ibrahim family turned up for the funeral, eager to show that despite Shabir's death and Dawood's imprisonment, they were still a force to reckon with. As the cortege left for the cemetery, one of Amirzada's men suddenly appeared. Before the Ibrahims could stop him, he flung crude home-made bombs at the mourners.

When the bombs exploded, they spewed ball-bearing, bent nails and half-inch screws. The shower of jagged metal dispersed the funeral party and left many of the Ibrahim gang members injured.

Fortunately, nobody was killed—a result that must have disappointed Amirzada's men. They had been singularly unlucky in their assassination attempts. Even the murder of Dawood had been botched. Later, Alamzeb, Amirzada's cousin ran into Rashid Arba, another member of the Ibrahim gang. He pulled out his revolver and fired six shots at Rashid. With their luck, Alamzeb and the Amirzada gang were sure to be disappointed—all six shots went wild.

But the worst was still to come. The Ibrahims had had enough. Shabir was dead, Dawood in jail and their members lived in fear of regular assaults from Amirzada's henchmen. Something, they decided, had to be done. Another roadside shoot-out was out of the question. Mastaan, Karim Lala and the other Dons would probably kill them themselves if they launched an all-out gang war. So, there was only one real solution.

They would kill Amirzada.

There was only one problem. Amirzada was in jail and there was no way that any of the Ibrahims could get to him. All they knew was that on September 6, 1983, Amirzada would be produced at the Sessions Court for the start of his trial. If he was to be killed, then it had to be done at that time.

There were obvious problems with this course of action. First of all, Amirzada would be surrounded by armed policemen. Secondly, it was not easy to smuggle a hit man into the Court. And finally, even if the attempt came off, the assassin was sure to be apprehended and none of the Ibrahims was eager to face the gallows.

In the circumstances, all they could do was turn to a contract-killer. The man they approached was Rajan Nair, popularly known as 'Bada Rajan', who had acquired a formidable reputation in the Ghatkopar area. Rajan supplied hit men for all occasions, and more to the point, some of his henchmen were expendable, that is, he didn't mind if

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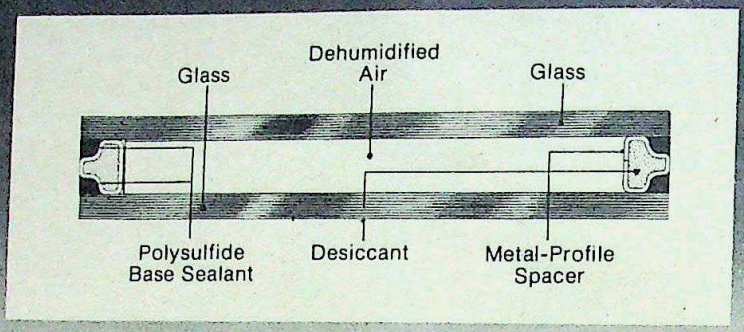

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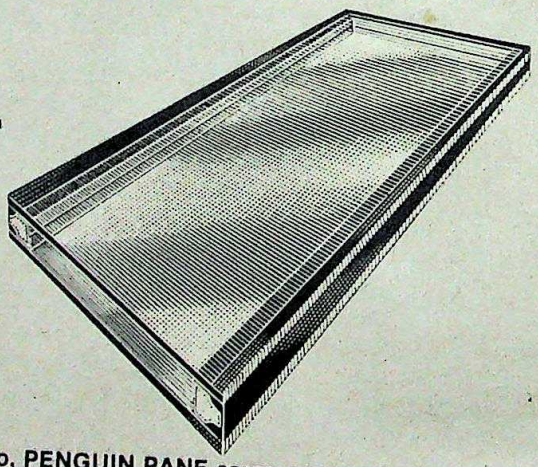

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GRIFFIN

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the police shot and killed them.

Rajan said he had just the man for the job. David Paradhan was 26 and had never held a steady job in his life. For Rs 40,000, he would kill anybody and if necessary, kill himself in the process.

* * *

IT WAS 11.30 IN THE morning on September 6, 1983, at the Sessions Court in central Bombay. Additional Judge SY Joshi was hearing the prosecution evidence, while Amirzada, charged with the murder of Shabir Ibrahim, sat quietly in the dock. The police were prepared to take no chances. Constables surrounded Amirzada and armed inspectors kept a watch.

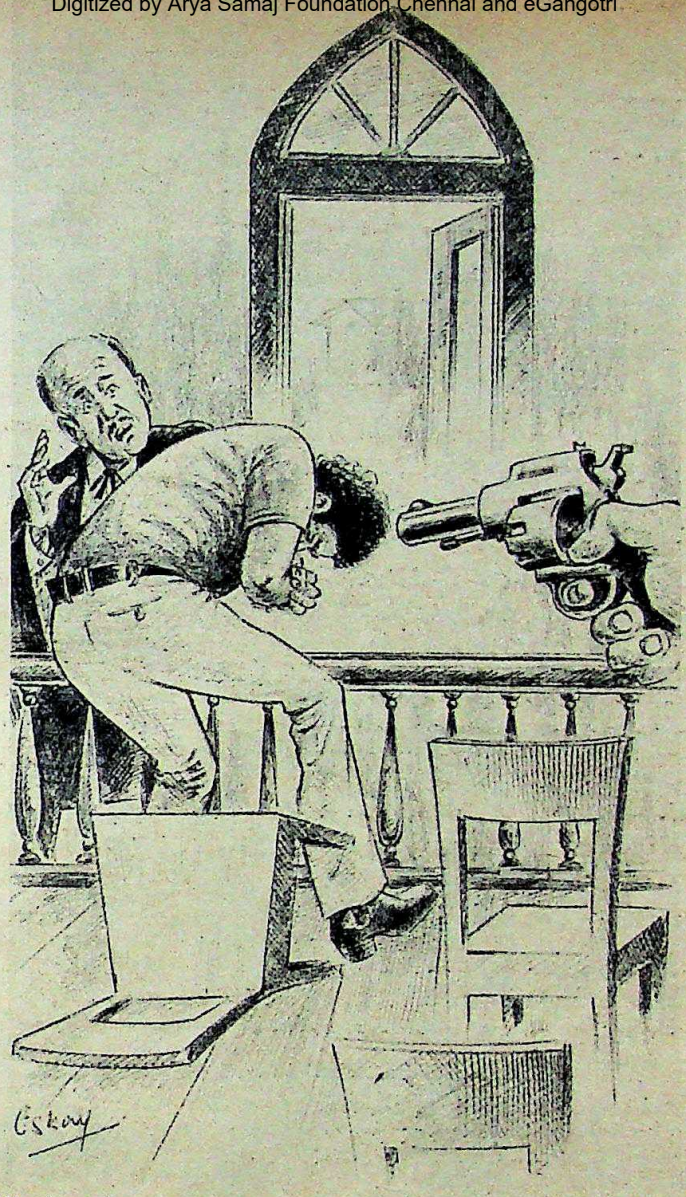
At 11.30 am, Dr Khade, the police surgeon, began telling the Court about the bullet wounds he had examined on Shabir's body. Nobody noticed David Paradhan stroll casually into the courtroom. The inspectors, concerned that Amirzada might try and escape, hadn't even considered the possibility that his enemies might kill him.

David, maintaining that slight non descript slouch, walked to the dock. Amirzada looked up and found that this stranger had whipped out a .36 revolver. David shot him in the mouth first. As the bullet drilled through his teeth and embedded itself in the back of his neck, David fired again. This time he aimed for the chest. Then he squeezed out two more shots and ran to the window.

The police were too outraged to react. David was in the process of leaping out of the window when sub-inspector Ishaq Bagwan of the Crime Branch finally drew his gun and shot him. The bullet hit his right thigh and as David stumbled, two constables pounced on him.

Others rushed Amirzada to the St George's Hospital. But he was dead before he got there.

Thirty months after he had been gunned down at the Prabhadevi petrol pump, Shabir Ibrahim was avenged.



Murder In Court

David shot Amirzada thrice at point-blank range as the police watched.

IT TOOK THE POLICE TEN days to pick up Rajan. They burst into his room at Tilak Nagar, seized his .38 bore revolver and hustled him into custody. Rajan was no stranger to jail. In the last five years, he had been arrested eight times. In his experience, all you had to do was keep your mouth shut till a kindly judge released you on bail.

The same thought occurred to Amirzada's men. Humiliated by the murder of their leader by a novice and hungry for revenge, they knew that Rajan would be out on the streets in a while. Then, he would probably go underground and when the case finally came up for trial, would be untraceable.

Alamzeb decided that he had to avenge his cousin. Honour demanded that he arrange to have Rajan shot dead in the same circumstances—a courtroom murder.

This was not easy to arrange. The police were now searching everyone who entered the courtroom and were determined to foil any attempt on Rajan's life. They went so far as to refuse to announce when they would produce Rajan before a judge.

Alamzeb was shrewd enough to realise that it would be futile to waste a member of his family on a hit man. It would be appropriate if he himself, put out a contract.

Fortunately for Alamzeb, Rajan had his own enemies. There was, for example, Abdul Kunju who had started out in crime with Rajan. Then, things had gone wrong; Abdul had stolen Rajan's girlfriend and Rajan had taken it all quite personally. In fact, Rajan had then tried to abduct her and persuade her to reconsider. Abdul and Rajan had fallen out and now, they hated each other's guts.

So when Alamzeb issued his contract, it was inevitable that Kunju would accept it. Like Rajan, Abdul Kunju was not going to send a professional to certain death. Instead, he hired Chandrashekhar Safalika, an impoverished rickshaw driver. Safalika could not handle a gun but he did hate Rajan, having been beaten up by his gang once.

Alamzeb and Abdul decided to train Safalika. They first bought him a gun and then they taught him how to use it. It wasn't necessary to turn him into a marksman, the shooting would be done at point-blank range. But Safalika had to learn how to pull the trigger and when.

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An Underworld Who's Who

The Gangs

Amirzada's Men

Amirzada Nawab Khan (killed: 6/9/83)

Alamzeb Khan

Shahzada Khan

Ayub Khan

Ayub Lala

Iqbal Tempo

Syed Batla

Afzal

Jaffer

Amirzada (extreme right), Dawood Ibrahim (third from right) and Alamzeb.

The Ibrahims

Shabir Ibrahim (killed: 11/2/81)

Dawood Ibrahim

Nur Ul Haq Ibrahim

Anees Ibrahim

Abdullah Ibrahim

Ali Abdul Antulay

Khalid Pahelwan

Anjum

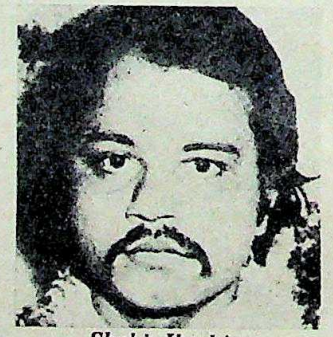
Haji Ismail

Lallu Jogi (associate)

Safalika: Rajan's killer.

The Hit Men

Rajan Nair (killed: 30/9/83) recruited David Paradhan



Shabir Ibrahim.

The Hit Men

Abdul Kunju recruited Chandrashekhar Safalika

A Chronology

Early 1976: Amirzada gang arrested.

July 1977: Journalist Iqbal Natiq murdered.

November 1977: Syed Batla's fingers dismembered.

May 1978: Shoot-out at Alexandra annexe.

July 1979: Cease-fire declared.

December 1980: Anees Ibrahim assaulted.

February 1980: Shabir Ibrahim murdered.

March 1981: Dawood Ibrahim turns to smuggling in Daman.

June 1983: Dawood Ibrahim arrested.

August 1983: Attempted assassination of Dawood Ibrahim.

August 1983: Bombs thrown at Ibrahim's funeral party.

September 1983: Amirzada shot dead.

September 1983: Rajan shot dead.

October 1983: Abdul Kunju arrested.

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If Rajan had suspected that he would suffer the fate he had himself arranged for Amirzada, he would probably have arranged for his own men to stake out the courtroom. But he thought that it was unlikely that Alamzeb would go so far. And when his first appearance before the Court went off uneventfully, he was relieved. Now, all he had to do was wait for bail, he thought, as the officers led him out through the compound of the court.

At that moment, a man in naval uniform stepped out. 'SS Pilley' was the name tag on his starched white uniform. A curious spectator, thought the police and Rajan himself paid him no attention. Then the navy man did something that took them all by surprise. He reached into his uniform, whipped out a gun and before the eyes of the armed police escort, shot Rajan Nair dead.

He was not SS Pilley. In fact, he was not a navy man at all. He was Chandrashekhar Safalika and he still held the smoking gun that Alamzeb and Abdul Kunju had given him.

* * *

NOW THE WAR HAD ENlarged its scope. While the Ibrahims were not particularly keen to avenge Rajan's murder, Rajan's own men were. They scoured Bombay for Abdul Kunju, they raided the houses of his henchmen and they announced rewards for anyone who could hand him over to them—dead or alive.

Kunju did the only thing he could. On October 10, 1983, he strolled into the Crime Branch office and announced: "Here I am. Now you protect me." The astonished policemen grabbed him before he could change his mind.

They hustled him away and kept his whereabouts a secret. When he was produced in court, the press was not informed and by the time Rajan's men found out, Kunju was back in secret custody.

By now the war was no longer a simple feud between Amirzada's men and the Ibrahims. Rajan's gang and Kunju's henchmen were involved too. Rajan's people announced a 'bandh' on the day they cremated him and all over the Bombay suburbs, the shutters went down—no shopkeepers wished to risk the wrath of Rajan's gang.

Because the contract-killers had become such an important part of the dispute, the Syndicate found that there was little it could do. While Amirzada and the Ibrahims had been somewhat amenable to persuasion, the killers respected no authority—they lived by their guns and now they would die by them.

As the likes of Mastaan and Karim Lala tried to restrain the fight, they realised that matters had reached the stage where no cease-fire was acceptable. The wily Abdul Antulay, who ran the Ibrahim gang while Dawood was in jail, was determined to wipe out Amirzada's gang. He knew that Alamzeb was an unworthy successor to Amirzada and sensed that by acting decisively, he could finish the gang once and for all.

Alamzeb, pleased with his success in killing off Rajan and avenging Amirzada knew that his opponents underestimated him.

And that is how things were at the end of October.

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SWRAJ PAUL:

Abandoning Take-Overs

Over the last year, Swraj Paul, 54, has become the most famous expatriate Indian in the world. His connections with Mrs Gandhi, his attempts to take over Escorts and DCM and his criticism of Indian industrialists have all kept him in the headlines.

The details of Paul's life are well-known. Born into the Aminchand Pyarelal business family (Apeejay), and educated at MIT, Paul went to England so that his daughter, Ambika, could be treated for leukemia. Ambika died but Paul stayed on in London and started his own business (the Caparo group) with interests in tea, steel, property, manufacturing and hotels. In the mid-'70s, he became close to Mrs Gandhi and is today, credited with an awesome influence in government circles.

Imprint *interviewed Paul in London last month after the Reserve Bank of India had sanctioned the transfer of funds from Caparo to his stockbrokers. It seemed probable then that the government would support his moves to register his shares but it was unclear whether he would actually press for management control of DCM and Escorts.*

Imprint: *Let's start with an allegation that you have not satisfactorily answered. Despite your criticism of the management of Escorts and DCM, your own Caparo group of companies does not seem to be particularly well-managed. What then are your credentials as a manager?*

Paul: I know that the Indian financial press has said that my companies are not doing well but I think this only shows how primitive their thinking is. The criticism is based on an analysis of annual profits. Now, I think a financial writer should know that an investment company is not judged simply on the basis of its yearly profit. As long as net assets increase in value, the company cannot be said to be doing badly. Take the case of my property company. If the rate of interest is 12 to 13 per cent than the yield will be only four per cent but this does not mean that the company is unsuccessful.

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You have to examine the assets or the properties and see how their value is appreciating.

I do not run companies solely to declare high annual profits. I have long-term aims and in the long run, the value of my investments increases substantially.

So what you are saying is that if the return on investment in Caparo is seen as profit plus asset appreciation, then that assessment works in your favour.
I am not the only one saying this. Recently, Caparo Industries, my public company, had a convertible share issue. The issue was a success though we said that the price for conversion would be 40 pence a share. At the moment, the share trades for 30 pence. Obviously enough people felt that it would rise to about 40 pence in the near future for the issue to be a success.

When the *Times* (London) ran a series on *Fortune Makers in Britain*, they began it with Swraj Paul. *They* must have checked my credentials.

I do not usually reply to this allegation because there is no point discussing it with people who don't understand finance. But my performance speaks for itself. I began with £5,000 in 1969. Today the Caparo group has net assets of ten to twelve million pounds. These are my credentials.

Mr Paul, you yourself valued Caparo at £10-12 million. But you have, by your own admission, invested eight-and-a-half million pounds in India. Isn't that a lot of money for a group worth ten million pounds to spend on one investment? Or is the money coming from elsewhere?
Well, some of it comes from my companies, some from reserves and some from bank borrowing. In fact, a considerable amount comes from borrowing.

Why are banks lending a ten million pound company so much money? Or are they aware of Swiss bank accounts that indicate your real financial muscle?
That is untrue. No bank can lend Caparo money against a Swiss bank account in any person's name. They have to look at Caparo's assets and reserves and decide whether we are deserving of the loan. Our record was good, the investments seemed attractive and so they lent us the money.

Look, a lot of people invest in India. Why are people only questioning where Swraj Paul gets his money from? Why treat my money so differently?

It is widely believed in India that these millions actually come from commissions in deals with the Indian public sector in which you have been the middleman.
I want to state categorically that I do not get into any deals with India. This is absolutely false. I am surprised that the *Times Of India* printed Prem Shankar Jha's view to this effect. It is not only atrocious, it is stupid.

Are you denying any involvement in the sugar deal with Noga or the steel deal with Davy?
I do not as a principle get into any deals. When the Davy deal was announced, the Indian papers said it had been approved because Mr Paul is involved. When it was cancelled they said it was because Swraj Paul is not involved. Not only is there no evidence, there is no logic.

"I don't want to take over Escorts or DCM. And no, I cannot think of a situation when I would want to do so."

But surely, there is evidence of the Noga deal?
In my view, Noga is not an affair worth talking about. Why the *Statesman* brought it up the day after I left India is something I do not understand.

I have made my position clear. During the Janata period various efforts were made to find something against me. Mr Ram Jethmalani appointed himself a special investigator—as far as I know, no government appointed him, perhaps he thought he was an extra-constitutional authority.

They filed this bogus case against me purely to cause trouble. When nothing came of this investigation, they said conveniently that it was because the Janata government fell too soon.

Now, Jethmalani is suing me for libel. I welcome the case because I will defend myself in court. What nonsense he talks!

I don't have any Swiss bank accounts though I am allowed to have an account anywhere in the world as a British citizen.

Turning to the Escorts–DCM saga, it now seems probable that you will be allowed to register your shares. What next? Do you intend to take over the management?
There are about ten companies all over the world in which I have a stake ranging from two to 30 per cent. I am not involved in their management. Why can't I invest in an Indian company without being accused of trying to take it over?

Let me rephrase the question. Do you want to take over the management of either of these companies now? And if not, do you visualise a situation in the future when you may want to do so?
No. I do not want to take them over now. And no, I cannot think of a situation when I would want to do so.

If I wanted, there are at least ten companies in Britain who would gladly turn over their management to me. All I want is that as a share holder of Escorts and DCM, the management does not rob me.

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Can we extend the scope of that question? Are there any public companies you want to take over in India? There is speculation about Mahindra and Mahindra. And it is rumoured that you are a large share holder in Larsen and Toubro.
I am not a large share holder in Larsen and Toubro. And I do not want to take over any public companies. I am only asking for the rights of a share holder.

In that case, do you regret having invested in these two companies?
No, I responded to an invitation made by Indian industrialists to invest in India. I did not anticipate all these problems—which, incidentally would never arise in England or America—but I am glad now that I have made my stand clear on two points. Firstly, if I am a share holder I do not want any theft by the management. Secondly, the company should be run by the best people, not by the children of the Chairman.

You have been called a bull in a china shop and your personal style seems to be characterised by a tendency to abuse. What do you have to say to this?
No, only the press has created this image.

That's not true. You called Ram Jethmalani a 'slimy liar', two distinguished journalists 'purchaseable commodities', talked about JRD Tata's scandals. . .
Only in reply to what they have said. Ram Jethmalani has called me all kinds of names. JRD Tata came out with a statement in which he said it was 'laundered money'! I was asked about it, so I said what is the holy cow about JRD Tata? All of Bombay was talking about Tata scandals—Forbes, Forbes Campbell, SKF Bearings, Taj etc. If I point this out what is wrong?

Have you considered what *I've* been called? Bharat Ram has called me a smuggler. These industrialists have tried to defend themselves by maligning me.

What about the journalists? As economic writers, they have a perfect right to disagree with you.
I only made a statement of fact. I said they had been paid off. I am prepared to go to the International Press Council. Let them see if these articles

"What is the holy cow about JRD Tata? All of Bombay was talking about the Tata scandals—Forbes, SKF, Taj etc."

are the work of honest journalists. In England I would have sued these people for libel. In India, it takes too long, unfortunately, to go to the Courts.

Do you genuinely believe that they only criticised you because they had been bought?
Yes. When I was in Delhi, Swaminathan Aiyer of the *Indian Express* asked me for an interview. I refused. He wanted to know why. I said that all he engaged in was character assassination. He said, "Wouldn't you like to reply?" I told him, "Mr Aiyer, I don't need a certificate from you." Then I asked him, "Tell me, how much have you been paid to attack me?" He did not have the courage to deny this.

Isn't it possible he simply didn't think it worth the effort to convince you of his honesty?
If you read the nonsense that appears in the press, you will not ask me this. They are purchaseable commodities.

Well, are you starting your own paper in India, then?
No (pauses) not really.

Not really? Is that a qualified denial?
No (laughs), we have thought about this in the past. But there are no plans at the moment.

It has been reported that Nusli Davar, Chhotu Karadia and others were to be part of such a venture.
In *The Sunday Observer*, yes (laughs). Vinod [Mehta] is amazing! I don't know where he gets his stories from. I have no plans to hire Chhotu. As far as Nusli Davar is concerned, I only met him because he invited me to inaugurate his association. Do people think I know him that well?

No, I think I can deny these reports completely!

Why don't you credit the Indian press with any integrity? Why can't you accept that they simply may not agree with you?
Look at the things that are written. I said that you can't treat a public company like your private property if you own only four per cent of the shares. Immediately one or two magazines and papers said, "Look at Ford. Look at General Motors. How many shares does the Chairman control there?"

Now, I can understand a glossy magazine missing the point but a newspaper writer should know better. There is no parallel. Of course there are professionally-managed companies in which managers do not own the majority of shares. I myself am Chairman of Nova Park Hotels with only four per cent of shareholding.

But the Chief Executive of General Motors does not siphon off money, he does not make his son Joint Managing Director. He does not treat it like a family concern. He does not claim to own it. My point is that in Indian companies this does happen.

Don't you claim to own Caparo Industries?
No, not my public company, only the private ones. I am not like some Indian industrialists. Look at Ashok Jain. He makes statements on behalf of FICCI without even consulting his members. Look at his own case. He calls me a foreigner and yet he insists on keeping

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his company's British name—Bennett, Coleman and Co Ltd. I can see why, though. If he called it Ashok Jain and Co nobody would buy a share in it. (Laughs.) Of course, every single one of his companies is sick!

Or you take Ramkrishan Bajaj. He gets up and makes a speech on ethics. Ethics? What about the Bajaj and Firodia case? That's ethics? Holding up excise duty—that's ethics?

Now, you'll say that Paul is abusing again!

Would you have felt so strongly about the structure of Indian industry, if your own investment hadn't got you into trouble?

After they started attacking me, I began studying the structure of industry in India. I find that industry does not show an adequate return on capital employed. Why? My view is that the return is there but that it is being siphoned off.

All these companies have grown because the government has held their hands. The top 11 houses in India have an investment of Rs 27,000 crores. I'm informed that of this, Rs 140 crores is their own. The rest comes from other sources and financial institutions. So really, they own a half per cent of what they treat as their own. And then they continually complain about government policy, about competition and about other investors. I often wonder, isn't it easier to just give them their half per cent and tell them to go?

"If he called Bennett and Coleman, Ashok Jain and Co, nobody would buy a share in it."

A purely practical point. Wasn't it a mistake to take on DCM and Escorts together? It would have been easier to take over Escorts on its own.

No, I was not interested in taking over Escorts at all. Over ten companies here would be happy to have me on their board. Why should I care for Escorts?

But let me ask you one thing. Supposing you had a three per cent share in a company. You would get your dividends every year. Now, would you, guaranteed you were of a regular income from there, still spend all your time looking after this company for a salary of only Rs 7,000 or so? Or would you try and do something else with your skills? I think most people would not bother to stay on for this Rs 7,000 a month.

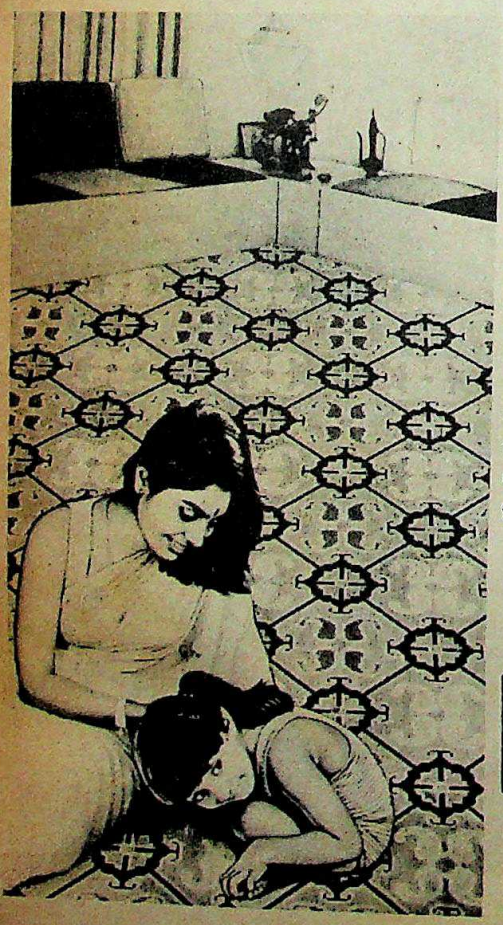
But, Nanda does. Bharat Ram does. Why do they do it? Could it be because they are actually getting a lot more than just Rs 7,000 from these companies? Could it be that retaining management control makes it possible for them to siphon off a considerable sum?

A last question. This has all been quite messy. Was it worth the trouble?

I feel very sad. I took an investment in India and had no idea that I would be attacked so viciously, my credentials questioned and attempts made to refuse to register my shares.

It has been called laundered money, I've been called names and I've had to spend so much time on this matter.

Why? All because some dishonest people who steal their share holders' money, perceive me as a threat! ♦



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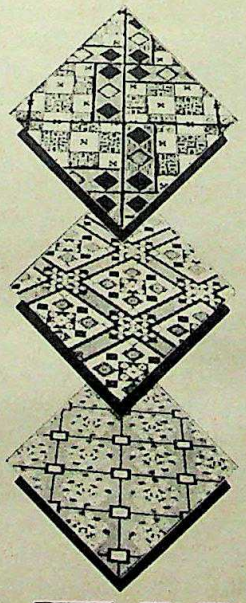

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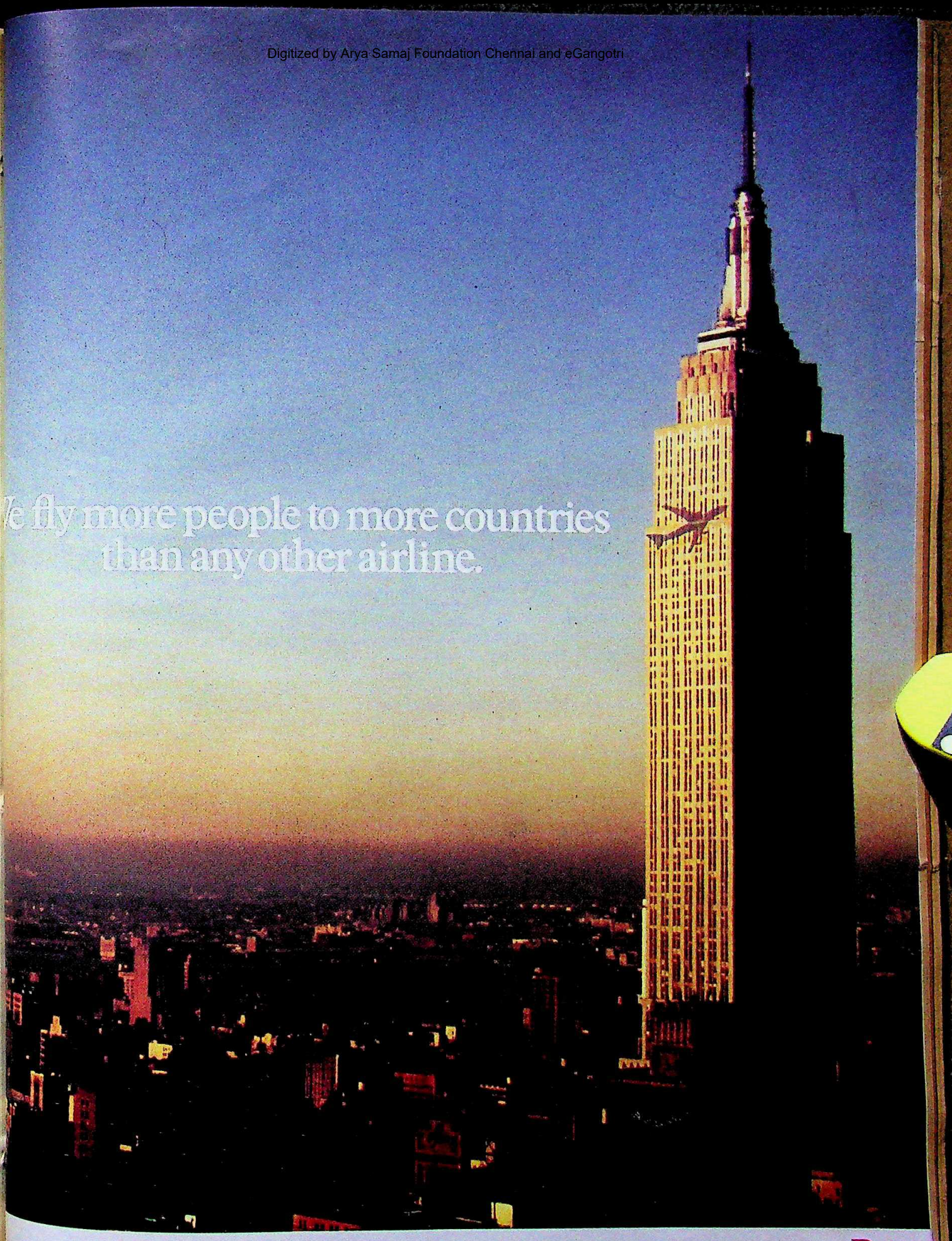

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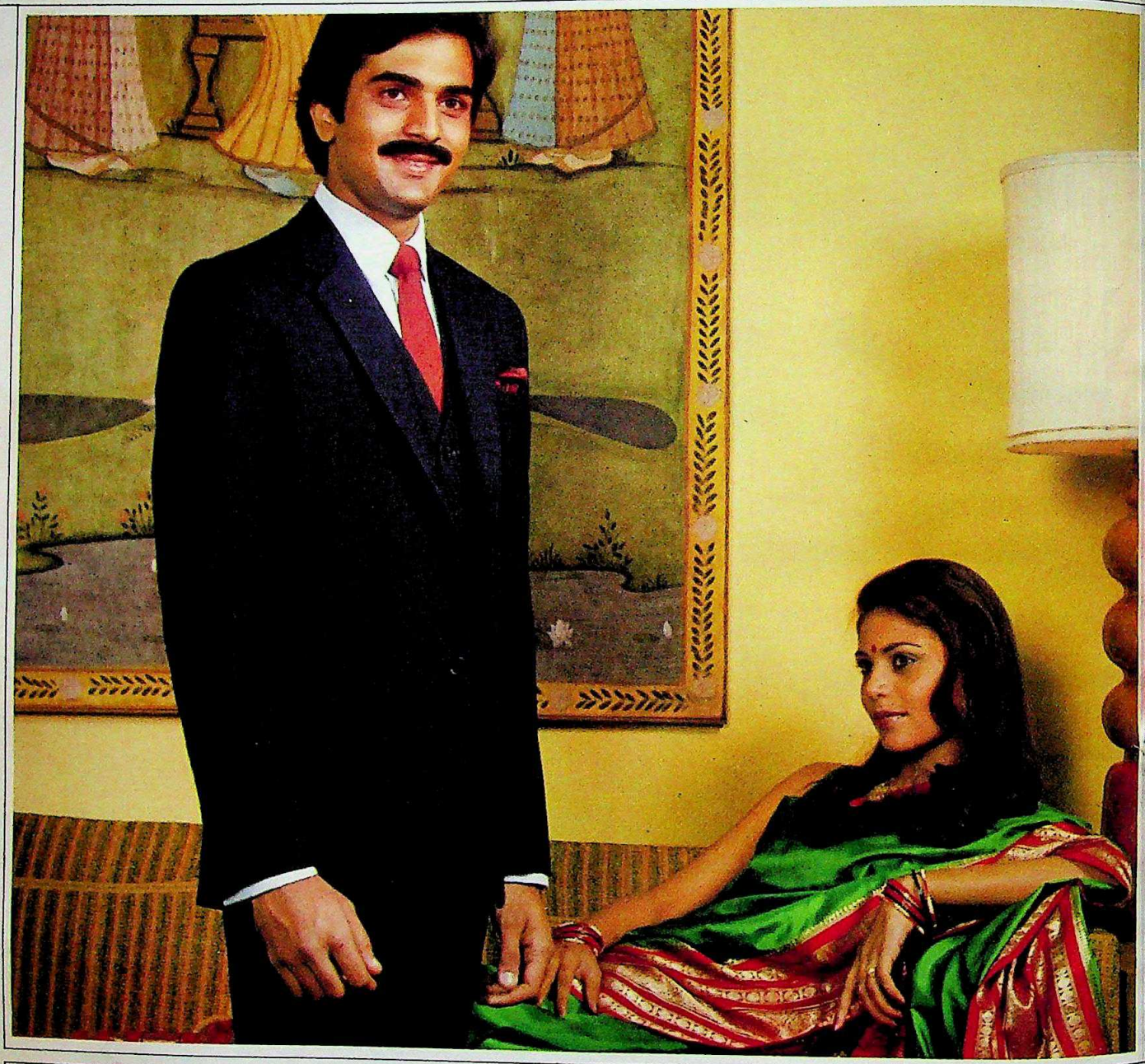

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This 3-piece suit in a navy blue fabric with pin stripes broken into tiny dots is stylishly understated. The two-button jacket with 9 cm. wide lapels has a centre slit at the back. The five-button waistcoat fits snug but not tight.

The fabric? Raymond's. Perfectly fashioned for the occasion.

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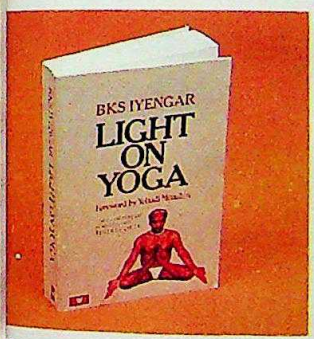

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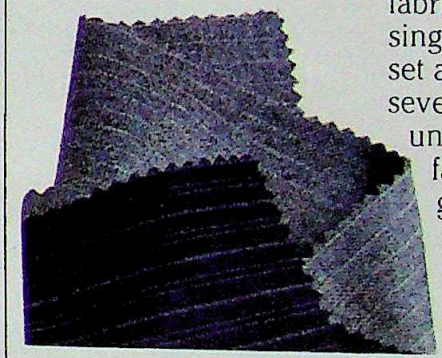

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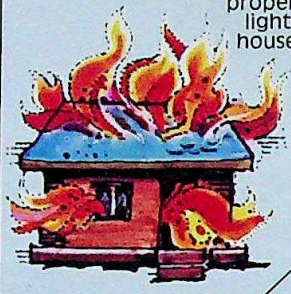

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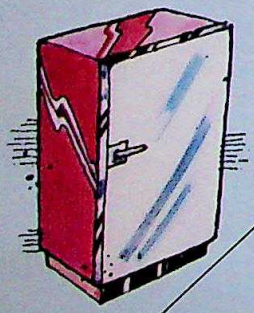

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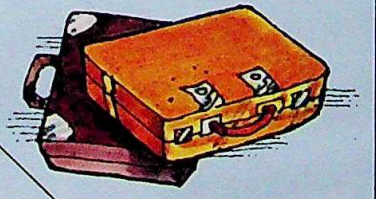

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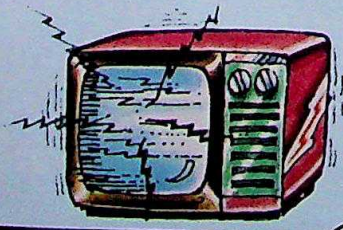

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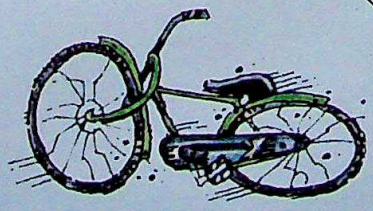

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Koestler's Papier-Mâché Gandhi

Rajmohan Gandhi defends his grandfather.

THE DEATH OF ARTHUR Koestler was a brave but sad episode. Both believers in the right to die when (and how) one wants, he and his wife put their principle into practice and, not long ago, ended their lives. In writing (at **Imprint**'s invitation) this reply to Koestler's criticisms of Gandhi, I hope I shall show the fairness and respect to which anyone recently dead is particularly entitled.

His death was not necessary for an acknowledgement of his writing skill. Of its epigrammatic character a phrase from his Gandhi piece can suffice as proof. He called the Mahatma's philosophy 'easy to eulogise and impossible to realise'. Pithy! But his attack does not demolish Gandhi. Though his spears make holes, what they perforate is a papier mache Mahatma, not the man who lived and loved and grieved amidst us some decades ago. In constructing this paper likeness, Koestler no doubt uses some pages from Gandhi's own *Hind Swaraj*. But it remains a doll. What follows will, I trust, show that the doll is not quite true to the man.

I will take up Koestler's points seriatim. He opens with khadi. (Not, in my view, the most natural beginning. While khadi was a life-long concern with the Mahatma, it is indisputable that India's freedom, Hindu-Muslim friendship and justice to the untouchables were even stronger passions with him. To Gandhi's role in India's struggle for freedom Koestler makes only a passing and derogatory reference; the other two goals he ignores altogether!)

Claiming that Gandhi wished to pit the spinning wheel against giant factories and saw it as 'an economic panacea' and the 'gateway to salvation', Koestler goes on to assert, "The spinning wheel found its place on the national flag but not in the peasants' cottages."

Koestler makes a pardonable mistake. It is the Asoka wheel, not the spinning wheel, that adorns India's flag. Still, it is true that at Gandhi's instance Congress accepted the *charkha* on its standard. Today, according to KS Bandopadhyaya of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission, 'more than two million people in no fewer than 100,000 villages' are supported by khadi and allied products. That their earnings are low and subsidised does not make this record 'a dismal and predictable failure', which is Koestler's dismissive phrase.

"What," it may be asked, "is the worth of 20 half-paid jobs in every fifth or sixth village?" The answer of course is, "Better that than to keep even these two million wholly unemployed." Better by far.

Yet Koestler's principal error here is not that he underestimates what even a pittance can mean to the spinning or weaving wife of a landless toiler; it is that he does not see beyond the (to him) archaic spinning wheel to Gandhi's key thought: 'production by the masses rather than mass production'. The latter enriches some (factory owners and urban workers) but the former saves many from unemployment and idleness; neither aspect seems to appeal to Koestler.

While quoting Tagore's reservations about the emphasis on khadi and some of Gandhi's sentences in reply, Koestler leaves out (perhaps for reasons of

ILLUSTRATION BY ESKAY

Rajmohan Gandhi, grandson of the Mahatma was Editor of Himmat *and now writes regularly for* The Indian Express.

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space) a crucial part of the Mahatma's argument. Said Gandhi:

"True to his poetical instinct the poet (Tagore) lives for the morrow and would have us do likewise. He presents to our admiring gaze the beautiful picture of the birds early in the morning singing hymns of praise as they soar into the sky. These birds had their day's food and soared with rested wings in whose veins new blood had flowed during the previous night. But I have had the pain of watching birds who for want of strength could not be coaxed even into a flutter of their wings. The human bird under the Indian sky gets up weaker than when he pretended to retire. I have found it impossible to soothe the suffering patients with a song from Kabir. The hungry millions ask for one poem—invigorating food. They must earn it themselves."

I see care for human beings in the above, not a fad about an obsolete wheel.

Before freedom, khadi had psychological as well as economic value. The hypocrisies of those wearing it have killed the former but the latter remains. When, as now, workspace is at a premium and fuel prices almost prohibit manufacture and transport, the world wants a product that can be made at home and has an assured market close to home.

If khadi was not and is not a perfect answer to this need, it was, at the very minimum, a remarkable attempt to find one; and it did bring life-saving food to hundreds of thousands, if not to millions. A microchip age might, who knows, throw up a modern equivalent of khadi, a needed product capable of being made in a peasant's cottage and of being gainfully sold (without being subsidised) in his village. If so, it would be, in my opinion, a confirmation and fulfilment of Gandhi's khadi philosophy, not its rejection.

BUT DOESN'T *HIND SWARAJ*, which Koestler brings on next, prove Gandhi's opposition to industry, western ideas, hospitals, courts of law and modern schools? Taken literally, some sentences in it do; and if Koestler were to confine himself to saying that all sentences in *Hind Swaraj* do not quite square with the modern age, I would readily agree. But everything in *Hind Swaraj*, which was written in 1909, is by no means synonymous with the essence of Gandhi. He wrote it principally (as the introduction to the original edition discloses), to show the futility of the grenade as the means to Indian independence, not to lay down dogmas for a new cult!

If khadi was not and is not the perfect answer, it was a remarkable attempt to find one; it did bring life-saving food to thousands.

Yes, he wrote prefaces to two new editions in his lifetime—in 1921 1938. But that was about all. In none of his countless talks to Congress or to audiences of India's common folk did he refer to *Hind Swaraj* or its extreme utterances. They were not the themes of his innumerable articles in *Young India* and *Harijan*. When asked in Noakhali in 1946 to express his life's message, did he say it could be found in *Hind Swaraj*? "My life is my message," he answered. My life, not a book I once rapidly wrote. Attenborough the filmmaker got the point and tried to catch the life; the result has stirred millions, even if quite a few have written critical reviews. Koestler the writer, had he tried to make a film on Gandhi, would have debated *Hind Swaraj* on the screen, leaving the audience to ask, "Where was Bapu in that movie?"

In emphasising that *Hind Swaraj* and Gandhi are not interchangeable terms, I do not wish to suggest that the former is indefensible. It should be looked at in perspective. Gandhi wrote it ten full years before Jallianwalla, five years before World War One, three decades before World War Two, in other words well before humanity would learn its shattering lessons about the West's moral weaknesses. It was a time when, at the drop of a sola topee, eloquent Indians conceded the cultural and moral superiority of the West over India, a time when the economic and military successes of the West had blinded most Indians to what was precious in their own civilisation. In *Hind Swaraj* and elsewhere Gandhi reminded Indians that their shortcomings had not destroyed the truth in what the wisest of their forebearers had said; and he spoke prophetically of the fragility of Western civilisation.

The book is not an impartial account of the civilisations of India and the West (the nationalist Gandhi shows himself in it), but it was a significant, and perhaps necessary, corrective to the adoration of the West to which many Indians had given themselves. As Koestler grants, Gandhi 'aroused in Indians, after centuries of lethargy, stirrings of self-respect'. Perhaps in *Hind Swaraj* he went too far; and no doubt a time later came when, in her relationship with the West, India exhibited more the sin of self-righteousness than a feeling of inferiority; but Gandhi's intervention in defence of Indian civilisation was called for.

I disagree with *Hind Swaraj*'s sweeping denunciation of the courts, schools and hospitals that the British built in India. But we all know that these institutions do not always offer justice, education and medical relief; Gandhi's charge that they harbour vice, degradation and misery is not unfounded. "Hypocrisy, tyranny etc have increased," Gandhi wrote in *Hind Swaraj*, touching on the effects of educational institutions. "English-knowing Indians have not hesitated to cheat or strike terror into the people. . . ." Entirely wide off the mark?

Does not involvement with our courts and hospitals often bring suffering? I doubt that Koestler ever had occasion for such involvement. I should like to believe that he did not, for his own sake! My last point in relation to *Hind Swaraj* is that Gandhi's stress, where medicine is concerned, on sanitation, public health and preventive treatment and, over justice, on mediation and arbitration, places him (even the Gandhi of *Hind Swaraj*) among the more modern students of these fields.

GANDHI'S SONS SUFFERED, SAYS Koestler, because the Mahatma 'tried to live up to his principles and never sent his sons to school'; and he quotes Gandhi's admission that he had not been 'able to devote at least one hour to their literary education, with strict regularity' and that 'all my sons seem

WATER FILT

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to feel the handicap of a want of school education'.

The first of these quotes and the fact that it was followed by an expression of 'regret that I failed to ensure for them enough training in that direction' disproves any notion that Gandhi was against literary education—that he was in favour of 'all toil and no learning'. We must remember, too, that when speaking of his shortcomings Gandhi was inclined to exaggerate. From what my father Devadas, the Mahatma's fourth and last son, used to tell, it would appear that for long periods Gandhi did personally devote an hour a day to the literary education of his sons, that he was a splendid teacher and that some of the Mahatma's ashram colleagues, Indian and European, also taught the ashram's children, including my father and his brothers.

While it was natural for the sons to remember (with disappointment) that they did not go to formal schools, it is not as if they were deprived of all intellectual attainments! Two of the four, Manilal and Devadas, became well-known editors. (This is a fact Koestler does not mention, though he does say, "Gandhi ordered Manilal to Natal to edit *Indian Opinion*," rather suggesting an assignment to a doghouse! In fact Manilal loved the opportunity and became an influential editor.) Obviously the ashram's teachers, including Gandhi, had been good at their art.

"Gandhi's relentless tyranny over his sons was exceptional," writes Koestler, "—he rode them like the djinn of the Arab legend, whom his young victim cannot get off his shoulders." With much respect, dear Mr Koestler, this is only your imagination. You never met Manilal, Ramdas or Devdas. They had the feelings not of 'a victim to an overriding djinn' but of sons who had received tenderness as well as challenges from a determined but human (and witty) father.

Yes, Gandhi's relationship with his eldest son Harilal was a failure for which both sides must take the blame. Such failures are not, alas, wholly uncommon, and 'relentless tyranny' in the father is not always their cause. Harilal no doubt had the courage to rebel but the enthusiastic participation of Manilal, Ramdas and Devadas in the movements their father initiated—a participation that earned each of them rough terms in the prisons of South Africa or the Raj—was not due to meek obedience. They believed in Bapu's programme, were certain of his warmth towards them—and had the fibre to struggle.

Hardness masked Bapu's warmth but his sons knew that this hardness was often the warmth's index.

A 21-year-old Devadas, Allahabad-based at the time, sends his father in Ahmedabad an account of the (1922) Chauri Chaura killings and thereby causes Gandhi to suspend his movement when it is at its height. (But how is Koestler to know facts like this?) Only a son trusted (indeed respected) by his father can thus influence him, not a son 'tyrannised' by his father.

"Go now and tell the Chauri Chaura men that they were wrong in turning violent," Gandhi instructed Devadas. He knew he could be lynched—by the killers or by the kin of the killed—but Devadas went, in fear and trembling and spoke to them. It was an experience he was proud of.

Hardness, thus, often masked Bapu's warmth but the sons not only never doubted the latter, they knew that often the hardness was the warmth's index. This psychological truth should not have been beyond Koestler's grasp.

IT SEEMS TO ASTONISH KOESTLER that Gandhi should have chosen 'as his political successor young Jawaharlal Nehru, a product of Harrow and Cambridge'. The reasons for astonishment lie in Koestler, not in Gandhi. Koestler is wrong in believing, and asserting without substantiation, that Gandhi was 'hostile to intellectuals with an English education'. Even in *Hind Swaraj* there was no hostility to any individual, English or intellectual or whatever; only systems were assailed. Moreover, who, besides Jawaharlal, were among his closest friends and colleagues? The London-educated barrister, Vallabhbhai Patel, the lawyer and man of letters, Rajaji, who wrote first in English and only later in Tamil, the Mahatma's superbly gifted secretary Mahadev Desai, whose mastery over English exceeded his considerable Gujarati skill, and Tagore, the universalist. . . .

Fixing his gaze on certain *Hind Swaraj* lines, misreading Gandhi, converting him into an anti-modern, anti-western, back-to-the-village, anti-democratic faddist, finding some confirmation for parts of his image in the sternness Gandhi undoubtedly displayed towards some of his ashram co-workers, Koestler is unwilling to recognise the spaciousness of his subject.

The fact is that Gandhi was a remarkable combination of the masterful Indian (or Hindu) ashram chief, freely imposing rules and tests on those voluntarily accepting his guidance and of that democrat, whom the West extols but does not always produce, who gives dissenting and minority opinions their due role. This second Gandhi, one that Koestler is blind to, played a key part in providing Indian democracy with a stable foundation. Much can be said in proof but let me only quote from that fine (indeed great) liberal journalist, the late B Shiva Rao.

"When (in 1946) all arrangements were complete for the election of members of the Constituent Assembly, I sought an interview late one evening with Gandhiji at the Bhangi colony in New Delhi. 'What is it about?' he asked me with a smile in front of his hut. I explained that it was the composition of the Constituent Assembly I was interested in: Congress leaders who had been to prison several times could not be expected to have specialised in Constitution-making. There were 15 persons outside the Congress, I took the liberty of adding, who could contribute materially towards carrying out such a task.

"Gandhiji readily agreed. . . . 'But have you a list of such persons?' he asked. I promptly pulled out a sheet of paper on which I had drawn up such a list for him and said, 'Here it is'. At the top of the list were Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr N Gopalaswami Iyengar, Dr MR Jayakar and Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer. 'They are all good names,'

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14th November. Children's Day.

How time flies.

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Gandhiji said, 'but show the list to Maulana Azad (Congress President at the time) and to Jawaharlalji. You may tell them it has my approval'. The list went through the working committee. . . ."

And yet Koestler calls Gandhi a commissar! Gandhi the democrat, Mohan the friend (as he was to Charles Andrews and a few others) and the Bapu who cared for so many individuals like a father (read any of the hundred-or-so volumes of *Collected Works* and you will have some idea) do not find a place in Koestler's essay. He quotes Tagore to buttress his line but does not tell us that of Gandhi the poet had written:

"He stopped at the thresholds of the huts of the thousands of the dispossessed. . . . When love came to the door of India, that door was opened wide."

I do not say that the yogi and the commissar were ever-absent in Gandhi's life. But let us not neglect the Gandhi who loved, the Bapu whose heart beat in concern for a Jawaharlal here and a leper there, for Miraben and Manu, Charles Andrews and Mahadev, Vallabhbhai and Rajaji, the untouchable and the victim of strife.

KOESTLER DWELLS AT LENGTH on Gandhi's opposition to carnal lust and what he rightly calls the Mahatma's 'quest for chastity'. Says Koestler: "Gandhi's lifelong struggle to overcome his own 'carnal lust' and 'animal passion', his public *mea culpa* when he confessed to a 'lust dream' followed by a penance of six weeks silence—all this made him the living symbol of the guilt-ridden Hindu attitude to sex. . . ."

Not Hindu alone. Lust is a sin in Christianity too and, if I am not mistaken, also in Judaism. It is placed along with pride, avarice and hate. Most people can write the word without having to use quotation marks! Of course lust is natural to human beings. But, equally, is not restraint desirable? Given free rein, does not lust break marriages and cause children to suffer?

Whatever we may think of Gandhi's fiery method of testing his *brahmacharya* (I would not recommend its emulation), we are on safe ground in supporting the quest for chastity. It frees a man for service—and gives him a unique appeal. Referring to Gandhi's battle for self-control, Philip Yancey says in *Christianity Today*: "Discipline opened doors of freedom. It did not close them. . . One cannot deny that the 'soul force' of Gandhi's leadership radiated power because of his unimpeachable personal example." Gandhi may have been unrealistic in believing that India's population could be controlled by marital continence, but his voice in defence of chastity; howsoever solitary it might sound, has its value.

The Bapu who cared for so many individuals did not find a place in Koestler's essay. . . I think the real Gandhi can afford to smile at Koestler's debunking of the toy Mahatma.

IN AN EXTRAORDINARY PARenthetical remark, sandwiched between a pair of dashes, Koestler asserts, "—as many Indians and others have pointed out, independence would have come much earlier without him—." Who have 'pointed this out'? Only a few of those Indians whose leadership was clipped following Gandhi's arrival, or their followers. Who can be expected to form a fairer estimate? Those at whom the freedom movement was directed, the British who ruled India.

Wavell, first Commander-in-Chief and then Viceroy in India, did not take to Gandhi. But in his journal he wrote, "He (Gandhi) certainly hastened the departure of the British, which was his life's aim." (Note that Wavell regards freedom, and not khadi, as the Mahatma's chief goal.) And the English historian AL Basham, while wondering whether 'in this day and age' Gandhi's 'austere doctrines' can have much meaning, adds, "There can be no doubt that it was chiefly through Gandhi's personality and the policies he prompted that India achieved independence."

KOESTLER NEXT CONTRASTS THE 'lavishness' of the Mahatma's World War Two advice to Britons, Frenchmen, Czechs, Poles and Jews to lay down their arms, in the spirit of non-violence, with his condonation of the Indian army's involvement in Kashmir when forces from Pakistan raided the territory.

A glaring inconsistency? No doubt. But surely we can distinguish between Gandhi the idealist who (like many an editorialist the world over) lays down general principles (at times doing so unwisely and indiscreetly) and the practical Gandhi who has to choose the issues on which to confront Nehru and Patel.

Almost precisely when the Kashmir struggle erupted, Gandhi tackled Nehru and Patel on the Hindu-Muslim, Indo-Pak question. He pressed for relief, rehabilitation and non-retaliation—and, finally, he went on an indefinite fast in defence of Muslim rights in India and Hindu rights in Pakistan. His attitude represented non-violence, or love in action; it meant a clash with Nehru and Patel, neither of whom liked the idea of Pakistan obtaining its Rs 55 crores. All this is familiar history to most of us. But Koestler keeps it out.

TOWARDS THE END KOESTLER refers to the assassination and goes on to say that with it Gandhi's 'defeat was complete'. This assessment provides the clue to Koestler's whole attitude. To be killed is to be defeated. Was the Crucifixion a defeat? Were Lincoln and Joan of Arc failures because they were martyred? If to be killed is to be defeated, then to suffer pain must be partial defeat and to discipline or deny yourself also a failure of a kind. What a verdict on the lives of millions of ordinary human beings who are obliged, by illness or by poverty, to endure pain or to deny themselves many times a day!

"India would be better off today and healthier in mind without the Gandhian heritage." That is the concluding sentence. Better off without a fight against corruption. Without a struggle for untouchables and peasants' rights. Without a struggle for individual liberties. Without an emphasis on non-violence in these struggles. Without the goal of Hindu-Muslim partnership. Without the injunction to turn the searchlight inwards. Without a reminder of *daridranarayana*. I think the real Gandhi can afford to smile at Koestler's debunking of the toy Mahatma. ♦

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KEEPING FIT THE DEBOO WAY

Astad Deboo on the dancexercise fad.

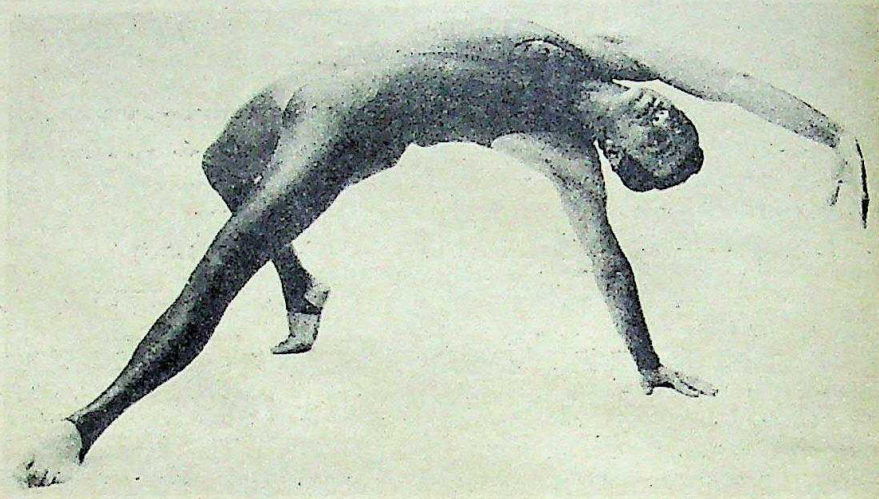
Astad Deboo, 36, began performing at the age of 22. Having specialised in modern dance and traditional Indian dances like Kathakali, Deboo sailed West 14 years ago. He has been performing ever since and has won rave reviews. The author Anju D Aggarwal met him to ask about the latest craze–dancexercise.

What exactly is dancexercise?
It is a combination of dance and exercise usually synchronised with music to keep a fast or slow beat. It is an ingenious approach to losing weight and also to toning up the body–a fun way to reduce and exercise.

Where does dancexercise fit in today's health boom?
Dance is essentially rhythm and dancexercise a strenuous way of combating extra tiers of adipose (fat). Today, people are getting not only figure conscious but also health conscious. Dancexercise not only keeps the body free from illness but also strengthens the muscles, tones up the internal organs and makes the skin glow radiantly. It makes you look good and feel good. It revitalizes the body by stimulating the best originator of energy and power–the centre, the lower part of the body. Like yoga, it insists on deep slow breathing which purifies the bloodstream. As the body moves it comes alive and all this reflects on one's gait, makes one aware of oneself. Exercising this way also helps to purge one of a stream of emotions, combating feelings of irritation, boredom, restlessness, listlessness.

Can't disco dancing be used as a substitute for dancexercise?
No.

Why?



Because, in dancexercise you bend yourself, stretch and dance creating an aesthetic geometry coupled with a smooth, disciplined control. In disco dancing, you move the body in a particular fashion and much more passively than in dancexercise.

After all that movement one is bound to feel terribly enervated!
Paradoxically, the more energy you spend, during these exercises, the more you get. This is because the body is geared upto the maximum with the right amount of breathing and free movements. Any fatigue that one might feel is only when one starts on these exercises. In fact, after a few sessions, the body harmonises beautifully with the music and a person emerges feeling relaxed and curiously light.

What kind of music goes with these exercises?
Generally torrid beats that appeal to the emotions. But there again we have various kinds of music. A pep-booster in the beginning to warm up; a more jazzy one to spin-off and a sober one in consonance with slow movements like those combining yoga.

Considering that these exercises are so strenuous, does one have to diet too?
This depends on the individual. I, for instance, increase my intake of fluids to prevent dehydration. In Bombay I believe some dancexercise classes have a diet chart too and the instructors emphasise the importance of diet. But, personally I don't think it is necessary because the exercises are strenuous enough. On the other hand, some teenagers and middle-aged people join specially to lose weight. For them, a more effective way would be exercise-cum-diet control.

How many exercises are there in dancexercise? How long does it take to learn them?
Each instructor charts out the programme for his class, with a sprinkling of dances. Some include yoga, some don't. Naturally, it would be difficult to specify the exact number. The duration required to learn dancexercise again depends on the instructor. As I am abroad performing most of the time, I conduct short courses lasting a few weeks when I am in town. My course is a mixture of yoga and various modern dances.

But, suppose a person cannot continue with them would he return to his original flabby self?
This depends on an individual's metabolism. A person *would* regain what he has lost if he does not control his diet. ♦

Anju D Aggarwal is a Bombay-based free-lancer. Her articles have appeared in the Eve's Weekly *and* Mid-day.

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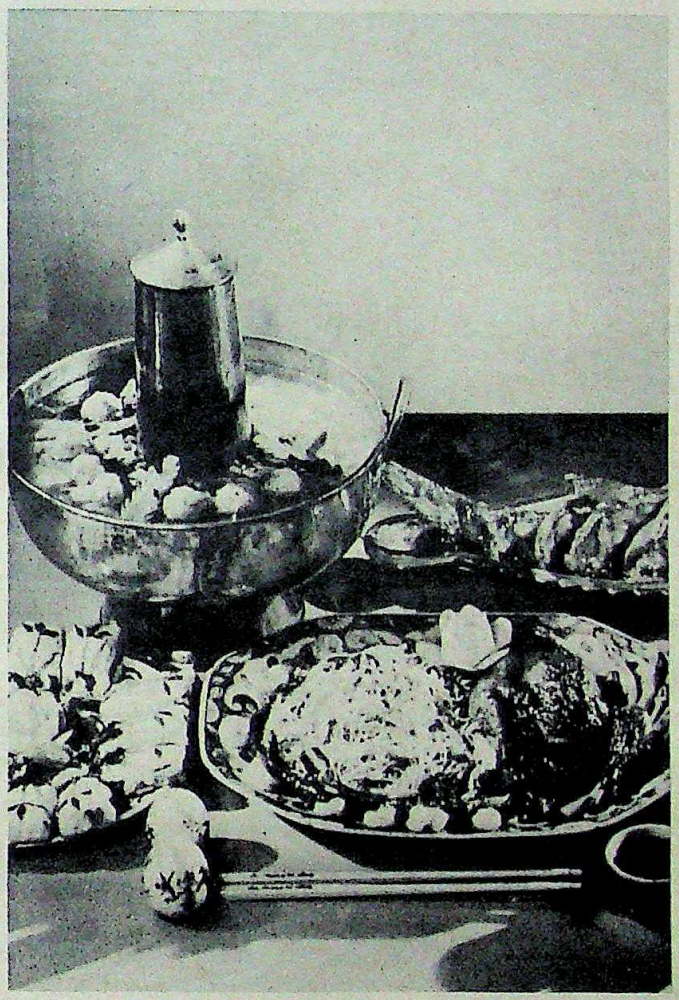
HINDI-CHINI BYE-BYE

Genuine Chinese cuisine is fast disappearing in India.

"REMEMBER THE FIRST time you tasted Chinese food?" asks an ad for a Bombay Chinese restaurant. Well, as a matter of fact, I do. It was at a popular eatery in Bombay's Colaba area and we sat in a small cabin while eager Chinamen waited on our every need. "What would you like?" asked the polite manager, almost as a formality. He knew what we were going to order, just as he had known what everybody else in the restaurant would eat.



"Well, let me see," mumbled our host, a long forgotten uncle. "Umm, I think we'll have a soup first. How about some shark's fin soup, eh?" This to us with a loud laugh. "Eek" said the ladies, while the rest of us made sounds appropriate to revulsion. "Oh, all right then..." a pause during which the manager waited patiently. "I think two large bowls of sweet corn wouldn't be a bad idea." The manager dutifully noted down the order pretending that he hadn't expected the selection.

He kept up this charade even when my uncle, having made suitable attempts to seem confused by the wide range of dishes, went on to order American Chop Suey, Prawns in Garlic Sauce, Sweet and Sour Chicken and all the other dishes he always ordered. He was charmingly polite even when my uncle presumed to compliment him on the cuisine once the food had arrived. "Not bad, not bad at all," my uncle muttered, his grave manner suggesting memories of similar repasts in Canton or Shanghai, in the good old days. At no stage did he snarl "What would you know, Indian pig? All you twits come and order the same nonsense night after night. If I gave you something more genuinely Chinese, you'd probably get up and leave."

As I grew older and discovered the joys of Chinese cuisine for myself, I often thought back to that polite manager and his inscrutable charm. I began to marvel at the patience of the Chinese and their apparent willingness to let us ignore the incredible complexity of their cuisine. What wonderful people! I thought.

Now of course, that restaurant has been pulled down but Chinese is the new 'in' cuisine in Delhi and Bombay. And in retrospect, I'm not so sure that the manager did the right thing by shielding us unadventurous Indians from the pleasures of his cuisine.

Largely because the Chinese restaurants of the '60s allowed us to grow up on a steady diet of chop suey and sweet and sour, most of us never really learned what Chinese food was all about. We began to think of it as heavy, slightly sweetish sauces, pieces of meat and poultry deep-fried in batter, and mounds of fried rice, sometimes with a fried egg on top. Those of us who were more 'adventurous' simply drowned each dish in chilli sauce while others liberally spooned chopped chillies in vinegar onto their plates.

The process of vulgarisation gradually became outright bastardisation. Restaurants began to learn that the clientele liked its food spicy, oily and preferably deep-fried. Menus were altered accordingly. Then, a new class of restauranteur sensing the advantages of running a cash-business in a high-tax economy, entered the fray. Chinese restaurants came up overnight at every street corner.

Noting this phenomenon, the publisher of this magazine, an old Hong Kong hand who visits India periodically, asked me if the popularity of Chinese cuisine was due to a new health awareness among Indians. Were we also becoming more international in our eating habits? he wanted to know. I had to disillusion him. The greasy food such establishments serve is by no means healthy, and most self-respecting Chinamen would probably pass out after eating it.

As NJ Nanporia keeps lamenting, the new Chinese restaurants serve a cuisine that is largely of their own creation. Even the most experienced chefs are second generation immigrants

Vikram Sinha, our food columnist is also the restaurant reviewer for Bombay's The Sunday Observer.

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and have never been East of Chowringhee. They know only the simple home-style cooking (the equivalent of our *dal-chaawal*) of private houses, and the few fancy dishes they have picked up are those that their fathers served at their restaurants in the '50s and '60s—ie the slightly more elaborate sweet and sour stuff.

But it hardly matters. The average Indian isn't after authenticity, he wants *masalas* and *pakoras*. And so, new dishes have been created, exclusively as they say, for the Indian market. One Bombay restaurant serves a 'Brando Prawn'. Right out of On The Waterfront, you might think. Actually, it is a simple prawn *pakora*. Another serves a Four Treasure Vegetable Bomb. It isn't quite Kublai Khan meets the IRA, rather, it is cabbage, carrots, potatoes and french beans finely diced and then squeezed into a little *tikki* over which is poured a mixture of tomato ketchup and red chilli. Bombay's suburban establishments are more bizarre. Confronted with Chicken Lollipops, I demanded to know what this concoction was; it turned out to be a sweetish drumstick.

Who eats this muck? Chinese chefs I have spoken to (who, incidentally are becoming increasingly contemptuous of their Indian guests) blame some of the bastardisation on vegetarians. While Chinese cuisine has many wonderful vegetable preparations, it is not, on the whole, the sort of food a vegetarian can eat day in and day out. But many Indian vegetarians have now taken to eating Chinese (in Bombay it is the Gujaratis and the Marwaris), and a new cuisine, consisting of Vegetable Bombs and the like has been evolved to feed them.

There is also what one Chinese chef calls the Punjabi factor (that I do not approve of these communal distinctions does not mean that I am not sorely tempted to go along with them). It was the Punjabis who created the vulgarised 'Moghlai-style' North Indian food of the Kwality-Gaylord kind of restaurant—a cuisine that nobody serves at home. Now, the same people have moved into the Chinese restaurant business. (More and more Chinese restaurants are owned by non-Chinese. And the same formulas have been applied to Chinese cuisine—lots of grease, thick gravies, chopped chillies and the golden rule: when in doubt, deep fry.)

That the techniques of vulgarised North Indian cuisine cannot be adapted to the delicate flavours of Chinese food, does not seem to have occurred to the new restauranteurs. And why should it? The patrons of the newer breed of Chinese restaurants are precisely those whose idea of *desi* haute cuisine was Kwality's. As far as they are concerned, one kind of *masala*-laden, oily cuisine is as good as another.

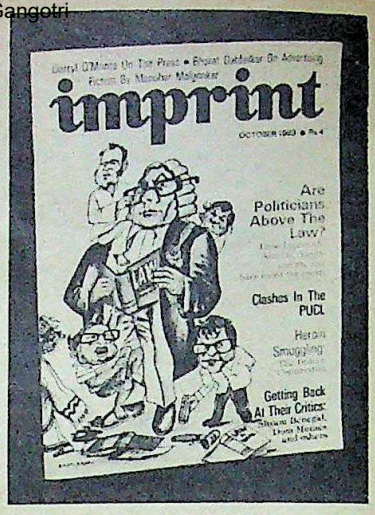
I've seen attempts made to argue that Indo-Chinese is a cuisine in its own right like say, Tex-Mex. It is, I suppose, possible to sustain this claim just as it is to argue that the revolting muck passed off as 'Indian' food by the Sylhetis, who run England's 'Indian' restaurants, represents a cross-over cuisine in its own right.

But there is a difference. After years of downing bowls of Chilli Con Carne, Americans are learning that there is a proper Mexican cuisine. The Brits too have begun to appreciate the tandoori cuisine of the Shezan-Kundan kind of genuine Indian restaurant, to say nothing of the Goa curries of the Bombay Brasserie. Most cross-over cuisines represent transitional phases before a genuine cuisine finds wide acceptance in a foreign country.

This is clearly not true of the Indo-Chinese food of our newer restaurants. The sweet and sour places of my childhood may not have encouraged adventurousness but at least they were real enough. Now, we are going the other way. Instead of turning to a more genuine cuisine, we are further perverting Chinese food into a greasy, tasteless mess.

Only a handful of establishments in Bombay and Delhi serve a genuine enough Chinese cuisine, and most of them are in hotels that cater to foreigners (not all hotel restaurants are authentic: ITC's Chinese food is as Chinese as Shatrughan Sinha). Otherwise, as the bastardised cuisine takes over, it looks as though we are going to see genuine Chinese food disappear from India in the near future.

— Vikram Sinha



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AN UNMARRIED WOMAN

Fatima Ahmed on the joys of living alone in Bombay.

MY FIFTEEN YEARS in Bombay have been a variegated experience. With much sunshine and some shadows. To be the city's milieu, to live its pace, pliancy and diversity has been my ambition. The '60s were edging out of calendars when I decided to call Bombay my home. A single woman living alone was still a discordant note in its social chords. More so when she turned out abstract paintings and earned an irregular keep! Families with rooms to let were wary of me. When they did not slam the door in my face, they battered me with questions, scathed me with suspicion—and would not, I am sure, have taken the paltriest of bets on my virginity!

But I had come to stay. Going back to my home town would have been the folly of retrogression. Hyderabad's decadent feudal norms were my *bêtes noires*. Its conservatism a prison for the artist and the woman in me. Freedom is the leitmotif of my life. Nothing can reduce me to routine or ritual. Exhorted by Shaw to "Try to get what you like or else you will grow to like what you get," I geared myself up for Bombay.

Accommodation was my most harrowing experience of Bombay. Almost insurmountable, were it not for my innate courage and a sense of humour that never misses out on the ludicrous even in a grave situation. I remember a Sunder Lal who had materialised out of an advertisement in a daily. A taciturn bachelor with an exclusive apartment furnished with every comfort. And he was willing to part with a room, balcony and bath for free for "whatever the young lady wants to pay. Money is not my hang-up. I want good, respectable company!"

Then there was Kami. An affable Punjabi amazon. She spotted me in an art exhibition and talked her way into

my naive gullibility. "A room?" she scoffed. "You must have an entire apartment to yourself. Budding artists like you are the country's pride and responsibility" and other such rhetoric. Then followed a series of parties where Kami tried to entrust me to the 'avuncular' care of the rich!

Sunder Lal and Kami are not the wiles of Bombay alone. They are the universal thorns in the flesh of an unattached woman. After my extensive travels in India it is only in Bombay that I feel on safe ground especially as compared to UP and Bihar where law and order have been assigned the niche of history.

Men, are one of the best things that has happened to me in Bombay. Without them and their attentions the city would have been boredom and concrete. I have more men friends here than elsewhere in the country. They are refreshingly different, liberal in outlook, Westernised in attitudes. My fierce independence and unconventional lifestyle do not frighten nor does my talent overawe them. I am of course speaking of a certain coterie: the nonconformist and the intellectual. The males I have met outside Bombay are the prototypes who either lust for a woman or propose marriage. Seldom, if ever, do they befriend her.

Behind the walls of Hyderabad, with its gossiping mouths and prying eyes, I had taken a somewhat myopic view of women's liberation. When I jostled in the peak hour traffic in the gents compartments of Bombay's breathless trains, I called it liberation. Also when I ate in Irani, Udipi and *dabha* restaurants, took solitary walks in the least sophisticated areas of town, ate *paans* standing by the *paanwalla*'s *gaddi*, smoked *bidis* on parapet walls of sea fronts. (Taboos that back home would have struck my family off the rolls of respectability!)

These acts of defiance, although small in themselves, helped break a big barrier in me. A barrier of class and bourgeois values. To be freed of the past, that dead load of the mind, was my real liberation.

In the last 15 years, Bombay, the fast-changing city, has changed its social attitudes drastically. A woman living all by herself is no longer an isolated incident. Her numbers have mushroomed, and she is now well integrated into the multi-hued fabric of the city. The once prevalent belief that she lived alone, always by compulsion and never by choice, is dead. Equally erroneous is the notion that she suffers untold privations. Life is what we make of it, whether single or married.

Mine is crowded with friends, travel, diverse interests, work and above all, an insatiable love of life. It is, as the phrase goes, a single blessedness—as a life with only options and no compulsions is bound to be. I can describe it the way Lamb describes his vocation, 'A walking stick and not a crutch'. Freedom for me is not merely having a choice but being able to live that choice to its fullest potential. And Bombay has made that possible. The city has never imposed itself upon me. It has just happened to me moment by existential moment. I have never, even once, regretted my decision to live in it. ♦

Fatima Ahmed is a well-known writer and painter. She lives and works in Bombay.

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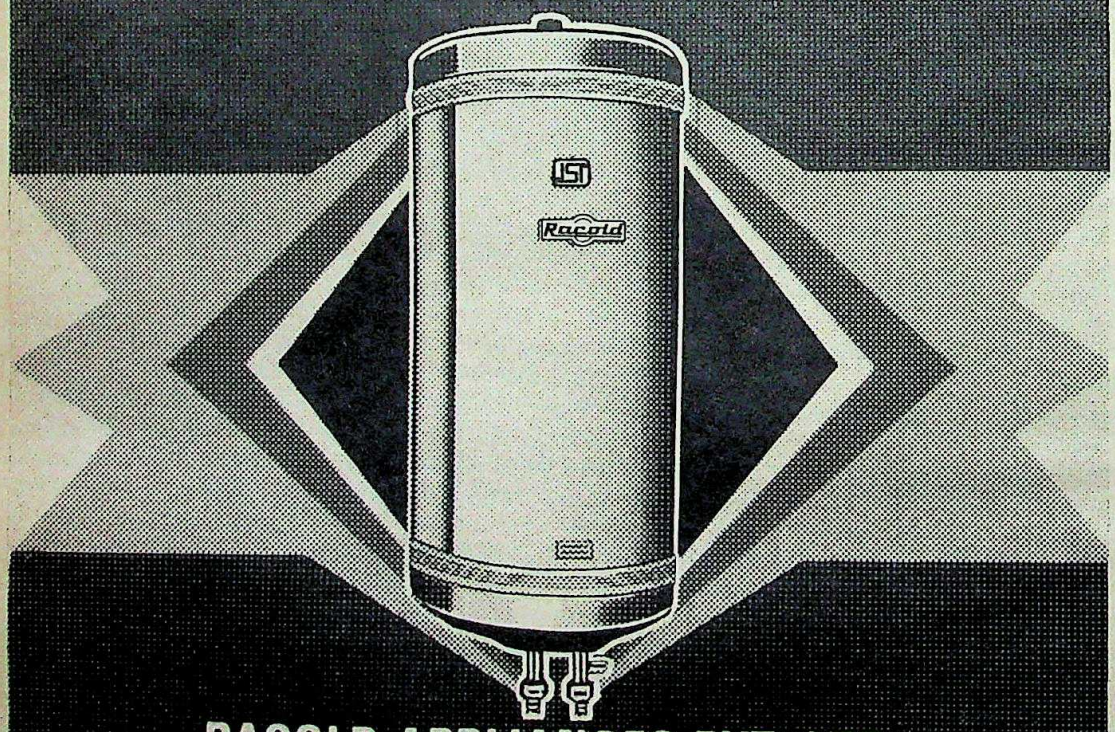

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THE ENTERPRISE-ING AD-MAN

A conversation with Mohammed Khan.

Q: Where did you receive your education and your training in advertising?

A: I did my schooling in Hyderabad. After studying English at St Stephen's I went to England and did a diploma in advertising at the College For Distributive Trades in London. I lived in England for nine and-a-half years during which time I worked with two advertising agencies in London and a small one in Cardiff.

Q: When did you come back?

A: I came back in 1971 and started work with da Cunha Associates. Then we started Rediffusion. But I felt disillusioned with the way things were here. I considered going back to London, but I didn't want to live like a second class citizen. I went back to Hyderabad and started a trading stamp company. I learnt a lot but there was no satisfaction. It was probably the most fruitless year of my life.

I came back to Bombay and joined Contract. I was with them for four-and-a-half years till I left and started Enterprise. Enterprise completes six months today and what is happening here is beyond our expectations. In six months we have exceeded what we were hoping to make in a year by 50 per cent.

Q: Have you found that studying advertising in the West has been a drawback in dealing with Indian consumers?

A: No, in fact it has been a great advantage. There they don't teach you to cater to the British people—they teach you the basic principles of advertising. The critical thing is to learn the basics of mass communication. I find that people here don't have their basics right, they are muddled.

Mohammed Khan is Managing Director of Enterprise Advertising. His campaigns include Charms and VIP skybags.

Q: You are known for your snappy captions ('If you want to talk you don't have to walk'—Superphone, 'Charms is the way you are'). Can clever lines sell a product?

A: No. Not even good advertising can sell a product. What good advertising can do, is to induce people to try the product once. After that it is upto the product. Good advertising can't sell rubbish, but it can change the image of a product. In the case of Superphone, everyone knew what an intercom was, but the need for one was never established.

We made the intercom an interesting product photographically. We showed an intercom like it has never been shown before. This is basically what creativity is all about—a continuing process of finding new solutions to old problems.

Q: What would you consider your most successful campaign so far?

A: There are several. Superphone increased its turnover three or four times. Charms has become the largest-selling kingsize cigarette in a few months. Lakmé shampoo has done very well.

Q: What were the reasons for the success of the Charms campaign?

A: I think Charms has become an institution. We decided to get out of the rut of doing the same old thing and do something new—more in keeping with the '80s. We have shown it as the symbol of a desirable lifestyle which is not necessarily limited to any particular target group, but has come to be accepted universally by everybody. It represents a lifestyle which is casual, free and informal—which is the way people are today.

It is not only the denim packet, it is the price value relation that has worked. We are offering a stylish image at a price most people can afford. And the product is fantastic! An example of a good ad not selling junk. The consumer is not an idiot. He is a discerning person.

Q: Several people feel that the Charms advertisement encourages younger people to smoke and is thus, ethically wrong. What do you feel?

A: Nobody in his right mind would launch a campaign to get new smokers. The campaign is not aimed at encouraging any newcomer. The idea is to make people switch from one brand to your brand. Also the denim packet is not restricted to any section. In fact the kind of people who are smoking Charms include 55-year-olds. . .

Q: Several ads these days seem to be imitations of foreign ads. Is it deliberate or does it just reflect a dearth of originality?

A: I don't think there is much aping of the West here. There are people here who live like that. Advertisements are just a reflection of social standards. If people didn't wear jeans, there would be no Charms.

Q: Isn't the current Superphone slogan lifted?

A: It is not my account any longer.

— Amrita Shah

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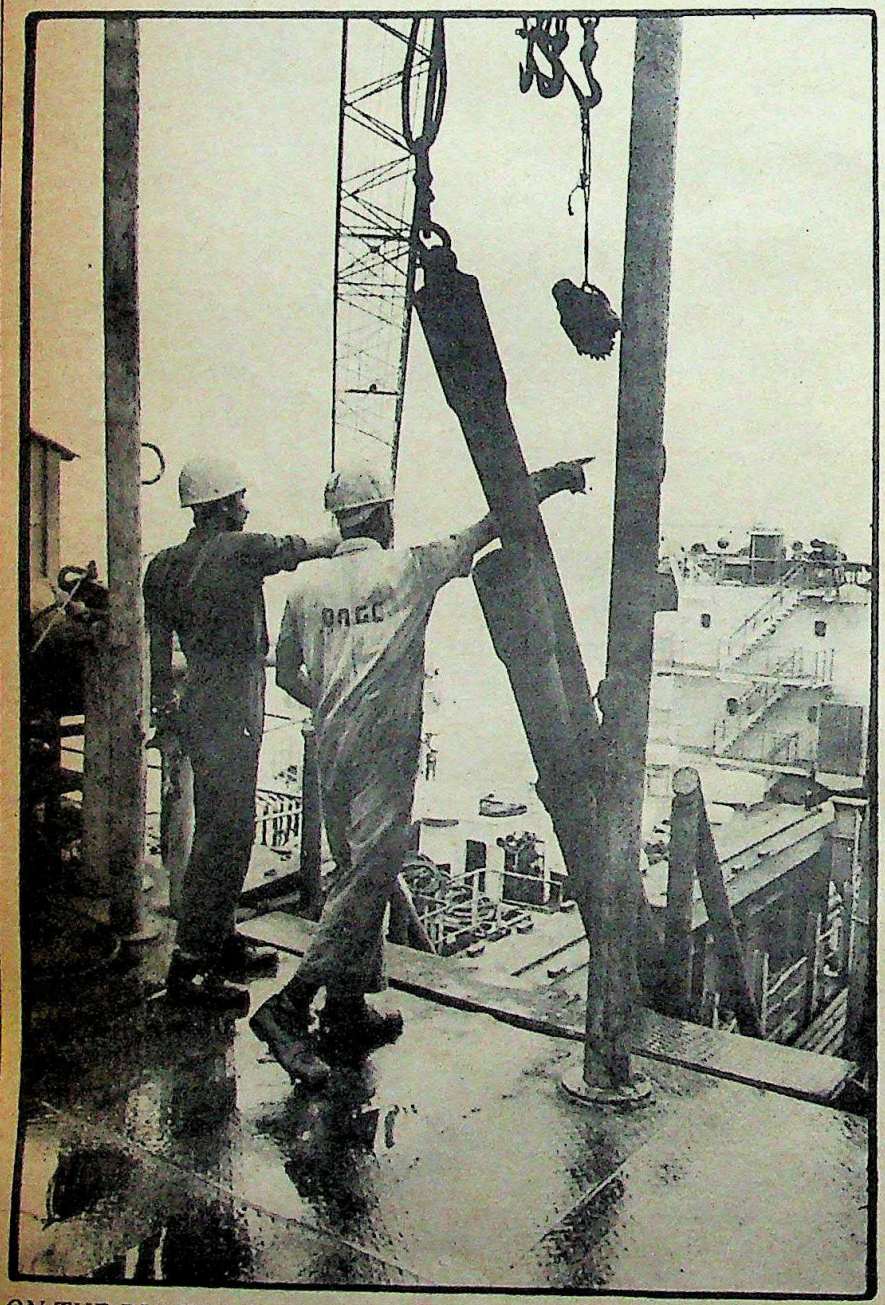
HARD TIMES AT

How India's oilmen cope with the problems of isolation and imminent danger on the high seas.



ON THE RIG FLOOR: Jobmen direct the descent of the heavy sharp-edged drilling bit.

WHEN KESAR SINGH rises at 5.30 am, there is just one thing on his mind. He dons his orange overalls, straps on his heavy workshoes, washes and breakfasts in the mess. He then makes his way to the towering 150-foot labyrinthine derrick on the rig floor aboard the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC)-owned jack-up rig, Sagar Pragati (SP). This will be his venue for the next 12 hours. Yesterday passed without a hitch and today, despite the foggy, overcast skies and the ominous rumble of thunder, he is alert and geared for the 12-hour day ahead—a job that has become central to his life over the past 24 years.

In the morning haze, SP's derrick looks like an electric transmission tower, its base a tortuous maze of glinting steel frames. The derrick dominates the rig floor where drillers like Kesar Singh and his colleagues the jobmen, rigmen and the brake operator ready themselves for 'making connection'. The five men take control of the cable wires, drill pipes and pulleys, transport the leaden sharp-edged drilling bit into position and blur into action as they dart and heave through the network of machines. The toothy bit spins swiftly as the rotary disc turns at 130 rounds per minute and soon it gnaws into the sedimentary layers in the depths of the ocean bed. A fountain of mud gushes out spraying clay blobs all over the rig floor. The entire operation is over in minutes and the jobmen collect the fragments that the drilling mud churns up as these will be thoroughly checked for signs of oil. In less than an hour,

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BOMBAY HIGH

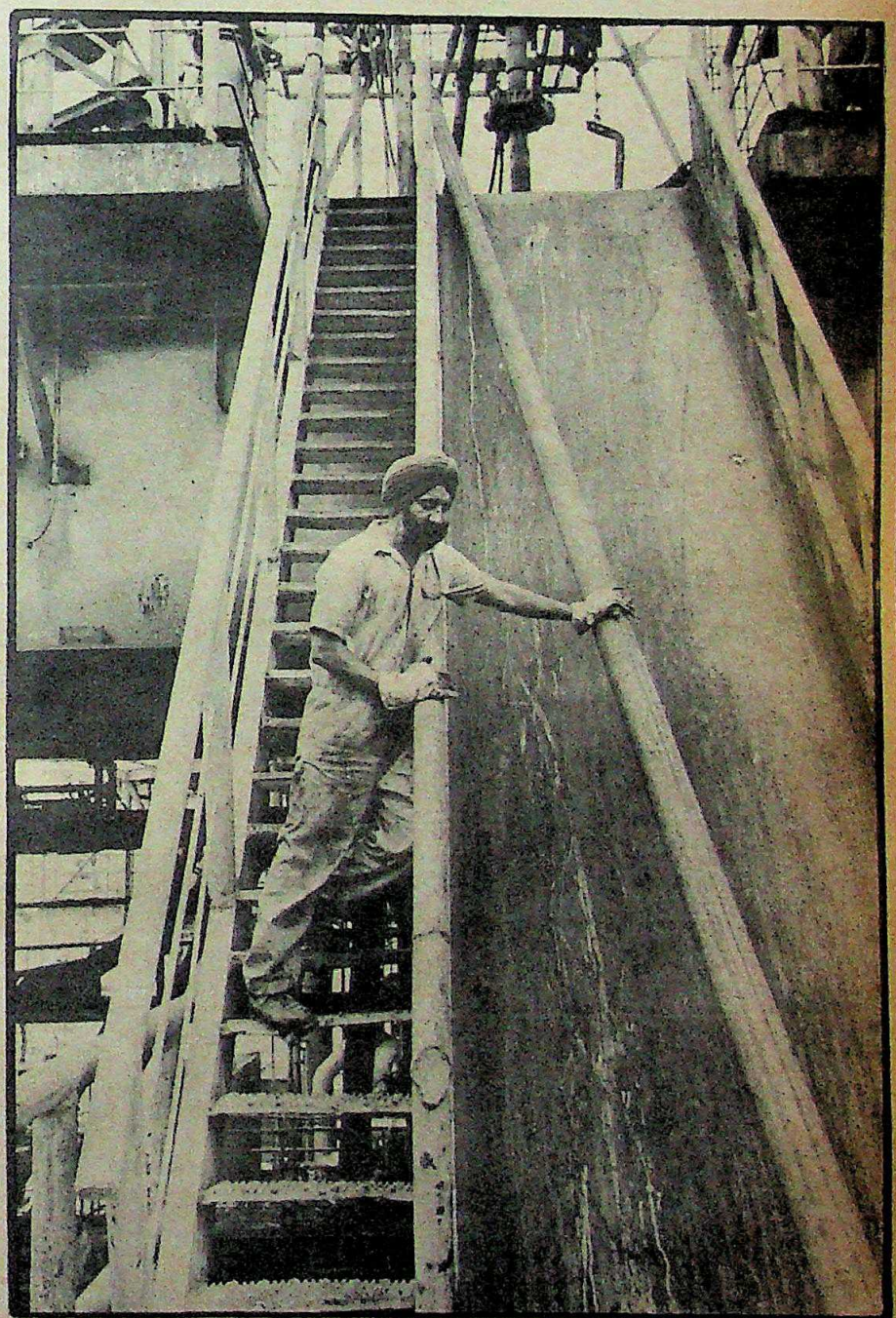
Text By Ketaki Sheth
Photographs By Sooni Taraporevala

the exercise will be repeated perhaps continuously for the rest of the day.

In a few days, perhaps a few weeks, given the uncertainty of the job, the last of the five oil wells aboard SP will have exhausted its supply. The metallic township on stilts carrying Kesar Singh and the rest of the crew of 80 oilmen will then move on to a charted destination somewhere else in the Arabian Sea, approximately 100 nautical miles off Bombay's shoreline.

As a senior assistant to driller chief Ujjal Singh, Kesar Singh, 42, earns about Rs 2,800 per month. Starting as a young jobman at the age of 18, right through his oil career, Singh has witnessed and experienced many hazards. In 1961, when he was 20, it rained boulders, oil and gas in his area of operation during the Ankleshwar blow-out. He has many such tales to tell of his years on the field not only to his colleagues but also to his aged mother, wife and two hockey player sons back home in Chandigarh.

Only some weeks ago, on board SP, when the papers screamed *Blow-out Averted On Rig*, Kesar Singh, then on day shift awoke to flashing signals and piercing alarms at dead of night. There had been a gas leak which could have caused a fire but which had been controlled by the night shift crew. And a few months ago, the SP crew had participated in a rescue operation when a young Indian seaman aboard a foreign supply vessel which had come to deliver essential supplies to SP, fell into the surrounding shark-ridden seas. Within minutes of the incident, Kesar Singh's supervisor, toolpusher HC Joshi had organised a rescue attempt under the able-bodied stewardship of crane



LONG DAY AHEAD: It's a 12-hour shift for driller Kesar Singh, now 24 years with ONGC.

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operator Hazara Singh. The young roustabout's life had been saved. And minor accidents are somewhat of a routine thing, explains Kesar Singh in a rather prosaic manner as he shows me his right thumb which bore the scar of three stitches.

Life on the rigs is punctuated by risks and perils, it's an accident-prone and hazardous job. "But I like the challenge, the adventure," says toolpusher Joshi whose oil career spans 25 years since the time he graduated from Agra University in physics and maths and soon after joined ONGC. "I thought of devoting my whole life to oil," reminisces the senior 'captain of the ship', who had a late marriage at 34 after experiencing a dilemma of having to get married as it was the right thing to do and dedicating his life to oil which is what he really wanted. "But my wife has adjusted tremendously and is very understanding."

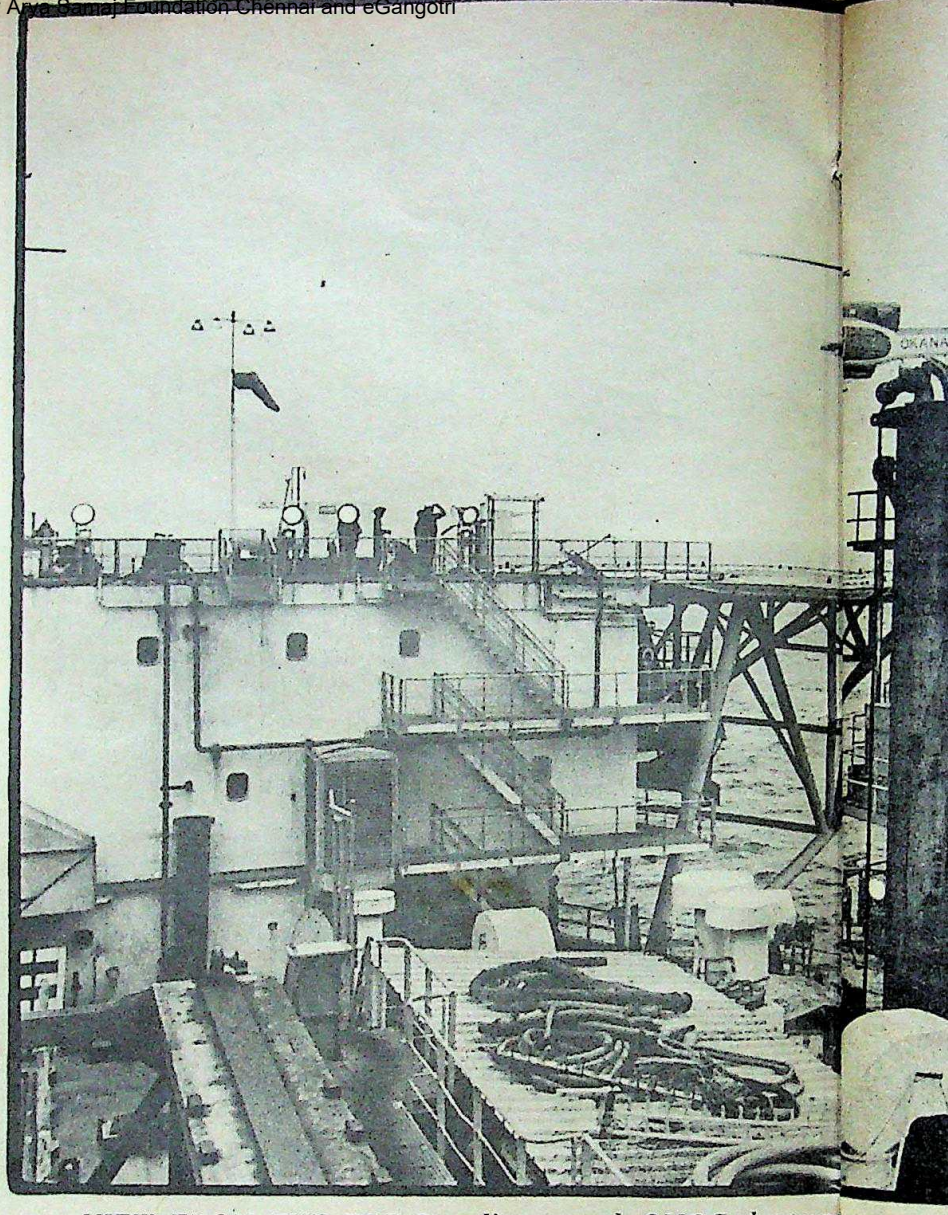
As captain of his crew, toolpusher Joshi earns about Rs 4,000 a month and is responsible for every drilling operation, equipment maintenance and safety check. Despite an offer of Rs 50,000 per month in the Middle East, Joshi continues with ONGC: "I saw it in its early stages, I want to see it grow."

For all the risks, the heavy physical labour and the long hours, ONGC employees on the field are badly paid. It's been 25 years before Joshi has tipped the highest pay slot and 24 before Kesar Singh has made his monthly Rs 2,800. "Even pilots get more," says Joshi. "People realise that a pilot is responsible for his 300 passengers. Now it's high time they realise our situation." But what keeps the oilmen in the field, as Baldev Singh, field production supervisor aboard production platform Bombay High North (BHN) points out, is the fact, "that here you are not only working for your family and friends, but for the nation."

To the bachelor on board an offshore vessel, an oil job is not only challenging and exciting, but a change from the everyday office routine and at times even an escape from daily pressures. To Calcutta-born T Mukhopadhya, 23, a petroleum engineer on Bombay High North, (one of the two production platforms that jointly produce 400,000 barrels of oil a day contributing largely to India's present 20.8 million tonnes annually) "It's the dough and the change from the regular 9-5 job." To Mukhopadhya's colleague, engineer Vikas Tayal, "There are some problems, but we find it better than being in Bombay. We can avoid local trains. Avoid saving or hunting for a flat. Given a choice of working in the city or here, I'd gladly choose being here." According to a mechanical engineer, "I don't have many friends on shore. So when I go home every fortnight, I just sleep. I get bored. And then I want to get back."

Work schedules aboard an oil vessel include 15 days on sea working 12 hour shifts and 15 days leave every month. But many bachelors like the engineers on BHN, long to get back after the stint at home. "It's the feeling of camaraderie, of friendship, of closeness," says Mukhopadhya, the most articulate of the young group of engineers. "When the cricket world cup victory was announced, we danced, we smoked (smoking is permitted in certain sections of an oil rig or platform), we had a special dinner. We were delirious. It was like New Year's eve all over again."

Abhay Kalyankar, 26, safety-in-charge aboard BHN is a chemical engineer from Chandigarh, whose job is to ensure the regular working of safety measures on board as well as the carrying out of weekly drills. Like Mukhopadhya and Tayal, Kalyankar earns about Rs 2,600 a month,



VIEW FROM THE TOP: Canadian-owned, ONGC-chartered n-seater

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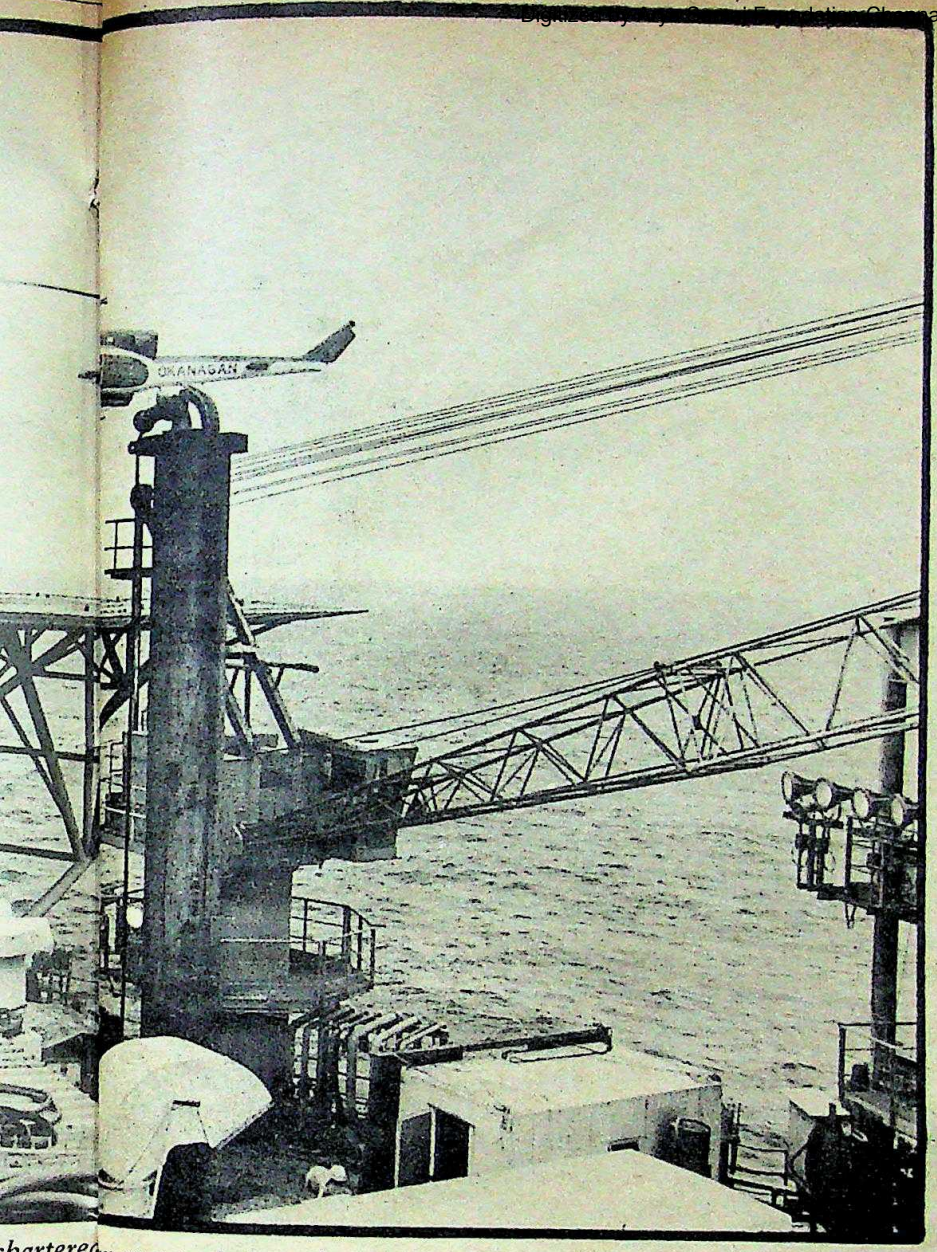

chartered *n-seater chopper hovers above Sagar Pragati's landing pad.*

works on a 12-hour shift and goes home every fortnight. Did you have initial adjustment problems, how does it feel being away and totally at sea, do you like the job, I ask them.

"If you have a wife and kids and accommodation," says Mukhopadhya, "this job's no good. But for those of us who are single this is great. It took me one week to get adjusted. I was, let's say, pre-adjusted." Kalyankar has a different dimension to add: "Socially, one is a loser. Amongst ourselves we have good relations. The best possible. But still there's a limit to the spectrum of relationships. What we get as off duty allowance (Rs 400) doesn't really make up for what we miss out on socially." Mukhopadhya comes straight to the point: "It's not just greenery and birds. We miss female company." ONGC operations come under the Mines Act which precludes employing women—engineers or nurses—to work on the rig floor, oversee infirmaries or even to supervise catering or recreational facilities which include video and table tennis rooms, carrom boards and libraries.

But videos, chopper rides, foreign cigarettes and hi-fi equipment are all very well, says AK Das, 26, Sagar Pragati's only directional driller. "All my friends back home think I fly by choppers, smoke Rothmans: few really know the hardships involved."

Unlike Mukhopadhya and his friends on the production platform, there are many to whom a job is a job. The fear, the glamour and the challenge to some doesn't really exist. To KG Dhamankar, a rigman earning Rs 1,200 a month, "*Ab ye sab aadat ho gaya. Agar hum sochte rahe tho accident ho jayega.* (The job is now a habit. If I keep thinking, I will have an accident)." Dhamankar is the son of a retired millman in Bombay. The only glimpse of their son's job is what little they may see of ONGC on TV as no photographs are allowed to be taken on board by crew members. To the ten roustabouts aboard SP who earn Rs 1,100 a month for jobs ranging from painting to mending to loading, unloading and shifting, ONGC offers permanence. The temptation is sometimes great to join a foreign rig here says one of them. "There they *start* at Rs 1,700. But they treat you like a native."

We notice and are introduced to five foreign technicians on board Sagar Pragati, whose contract with SP terminates sometime in November this year. The technicians are employees of the American-owned oil company, Atwood Oceanics, which has nine rigs all over the world including two in India (Shannandoah, Gettysburg). The Atwood personnel aboard SP include a toolpusher, a barge engineer, a driller, an electrician and a mechanic. We learn that they get paid far more than their Indian counterparts, fly home to different parts of the world after every month of work and get handsome perks. In fact, ONGC pays $ 40,000 per day for every foreign rig contracted for Indian operations. (There are seven foreign rigs contracted by ONGC, and six ONGC India-owned oil rigs in Bombay High's offshore operations.)

According to Paul L Daigle, drilling superintendent of Atwood's Bombay operations, "There's a lot of potential here. It's just that here everything is controlled by the government. In Saudi Arabia, things were the opposite. The government contracted private foreign oil companies on a large scale and they struck rich." When asked about India being self-sufficient by 1990 which is the projected estimate (today India produces 65 per cent of its oil), Daigle feels were it not for the tangle of red-tape, it would be 'much sooner'.

Although most officers were agreeable that they got along well with their foreign counterparts, there was a general feeling of 'we can really do the job

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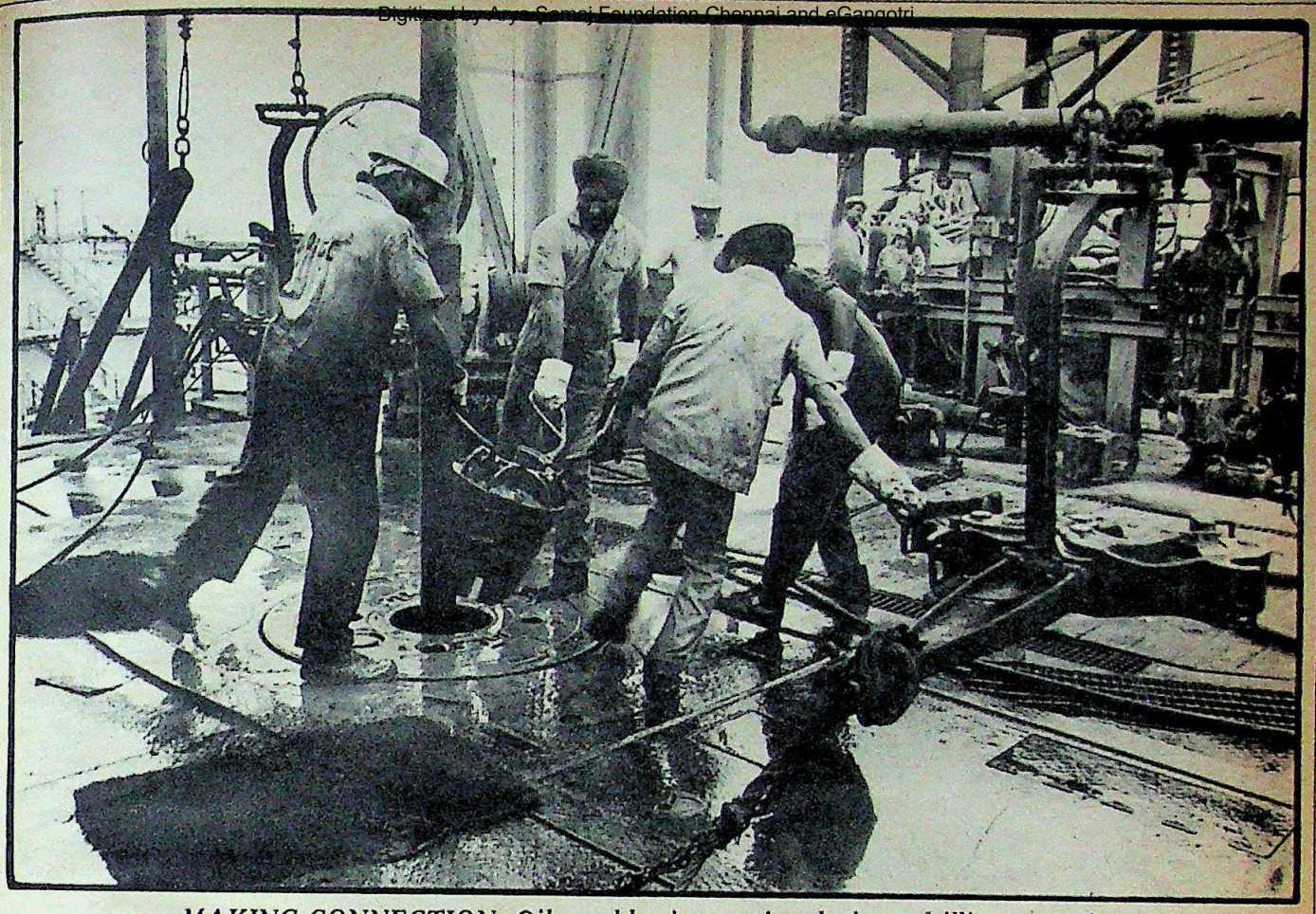

MAKING CONNECTION: Oilmen blur into action during a drilling operation.

as well'; and that yes, knowing about their generous salaries and perks, does cause a feeling of dissatisfaction. According to one engineer aboard the BHN platform who has often to meet with foreign consultants, "Some of them just hate Indians. You can tell. Some are such snobs. There's even an expatriate's menu here. And during recreation, they stick to themselves. Sometimes they don't even do a damn thing. Recently, there was a problem with the pumps and generators. A few 'experts' came and made it worse. Most of them have a superiority complex."

To many who have families and children and come from all parts of the country, the 15-day absence from home every month is 'a mental strain we carry subconsciously', says toolpusher Joshi. "Here you are in a mousetrap. If the platform catches on fire although there are many precautionary measures, you are still trapped. And this is worrying to many of our families," adds an engineer. "Many of them hide the real facts," explains Joshi, who as captain of his rig deals with the many personal problems that his crew experience. According to Baldev Singh, field production supervisor, at BHN, "Our life is much tougher than other public sector undertakings. Except perhaps in the coal mines. Once you're here, you're cut off from the mainstream. Every early bird goes to his nest every evening. We go every 14 days. This is our major disadvantage."

Going home every fortnight entails advance train reservations as not getting a ticket is an expensive business for most employees for whom Rs 12 a day (daily allowance) in Bombay is inadequate. "We miss so much time just organising getting home," says an engineer whose home is in Bulandashar, UP. The lack of ONGC assistance in train reservations affects many. Some, like Om Prakash, crane operator with BHN take 3-4 days just getting home, leave alone time spent in getting a ticket. Although the helicopter taxi service transports personnel from each of the six ONGC rigs and two production platforms six times a day, those like Prakash from Hoshiarpur village in Punjab have to change trains and then take a bus home.

But reservations and risks are not the only dilemmas. To be working in a high security area cut off from the mainstream, means that even families never get a chance to visit and since photography is generally prohibited, few families get a feel of what it's really like. To some, like crane operator Om Prakash, life at sea was a totally new experience. When Prakash first joined Bombay offshore, there were times when he would stand at the railing of the high-rise production platform and look out at the everchanging all-encompassing sea: *"Kahan aake phas gaye? Bombay High aake mai ne samundar pehli baar dekha. Hamare khandaan me se kisi ne samundar nahi dekha hai.* (How did I get trapped here? At home no one has ever seen the sea. It was only after joining Bombay High that I saw the sea)." And, he adds, when he describes cyclones and typhoons to the family back home they are totally mesmerised. Being 'at sea', quite literally also implies being isolated targets at war time. Says Joshi: "We are sitting ducks for the Pakistanis. From Karachi they can just fire."

We had the opportunity to spend a day at a production platform where oil is separated, processed, tested and piped to Uran via submarine pipes, and a

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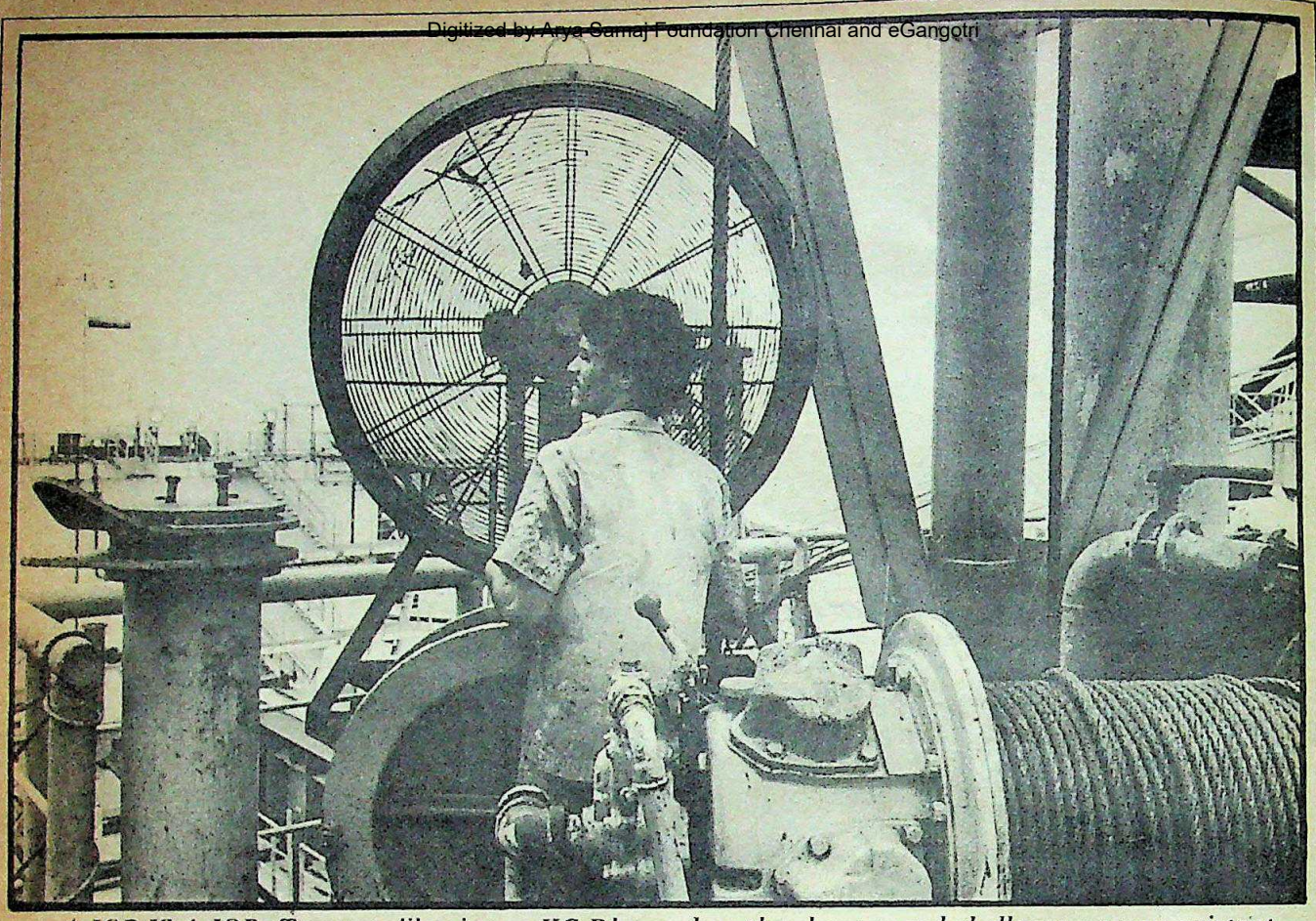

A JOB IS A JOB: To some, like rigman KG Dhamankar, the glamour and challenge are non-existent.

day at a rig where oil is actually drilled. We had occasion to meet oilmen of different categories and photograph them at work. The difference here as opposed to most other public sector undertakings that spend more time offering *chai* and going through the whole PRO formula, is that no time is wasted on frills and fuss. As Baldev Singh of BHN says, "You become so barrel conscious—every minute is measured by the number of barrels."

In fact it was a particularly trying and 'barrel conscious' day for Baldev Singh the day we met him. Around lunch-time when we were in the mess with a group of officers at BHN, there was a violent split-second vibration which was followed by a power failure and resulted in what is referred to as a 'shut-down'. The shut-down lasted 25 minutes and the loss of production time was equivalent to 3,000 barrels of oil. This particular shut-down, we were told, was caused by a supply vessel colliding with a portion of the production platform which had caused a generator breakdown. Such shut-downs, while being of critical importance, can be caused by any one of many factors: fuel failure, high exhaust temperatures, failure of a cooling van, a sudden and violent vibration and/or the failure of the power generator, as was this particular case.

There was visible panic on Baldev Singh's face as he and his crew swung into action to put right the shut-down. But Singh has been used to much graver incidents. While working on a rig in Kalol, Gujarat, in the '60s, Baldev Singh recalls having actually put out a blow-out. "People's first reaction was to run away," he recalls. "I started operating the blow-out preventer and it went out in half an hour. I then grew unconscious and the next thing, I knew I was in Wadilal hospital. I was able to save the well but it was a frightening and unnerving experience."

With all the instability of this kind of field job, few would rather opt for the administrative office kind of job where you wear a suit, carry a briefcase and sit in an airconditioned office. Here, officer or roustabout wear work overalls and are right on the spot where the job is. According to a class one officer, families and society at large haven't really been able to accept this soiled hands, stained overalls, 'workman's image'. "Unfortunately, the dignity of labour hasn't really been accepted in this country and there are many who can't understand that we are all out in the field working together." To 22-year-old mechanical engineer Ashwini Kumar, whose first job this is, working at the heart of the matter has yet another dimension: "Working with one's hands makes you really get to the core of engineering."

As offshore oil drilling is still fairly new in India, there are many for whom this is the start of a new experience. Few have really given retirement a thought. Says Ujjal Singh who started out as a science teacher and ended up being 19 years with ONGC, "When I retire, I'll probably join my father in making musical instruments."

To Ujjal Singh, retirement at 58 would see him back with the sitars and harmoniums he grew up with. For many others, for whom retirement is a long way off, it means enjoying, savouring and experiencing every minute with its frustrations and its rewards. In the meanwhile, "It is the little things we miss most. Like taking a walk to a *dhabha* for a cup of *chai*. The simple motion of life."

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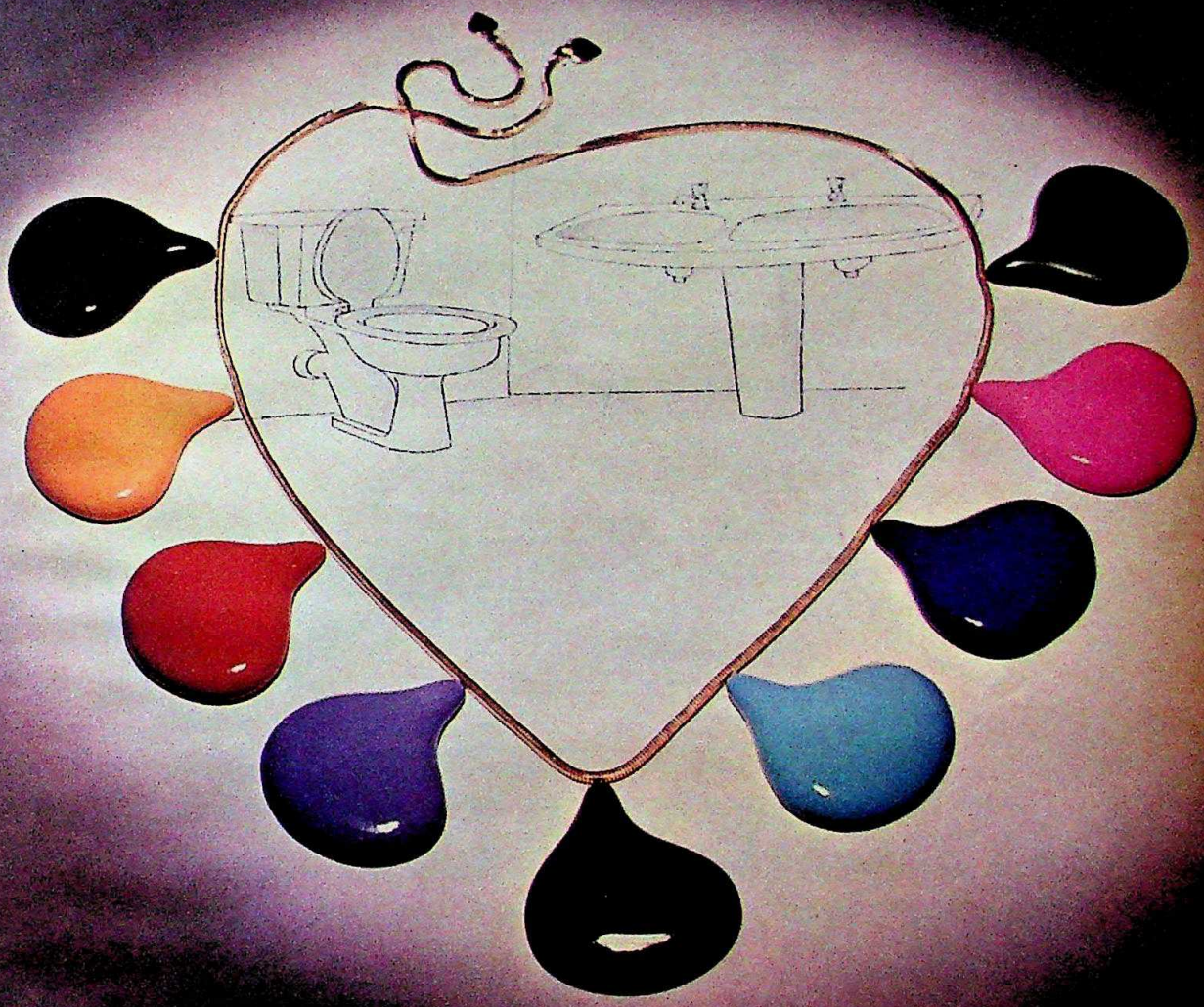

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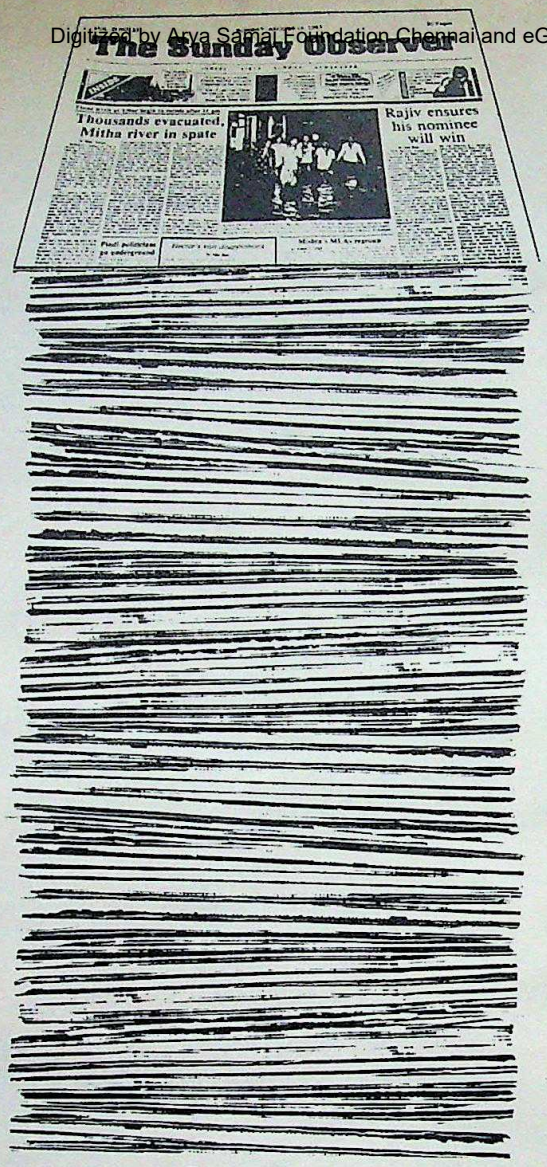

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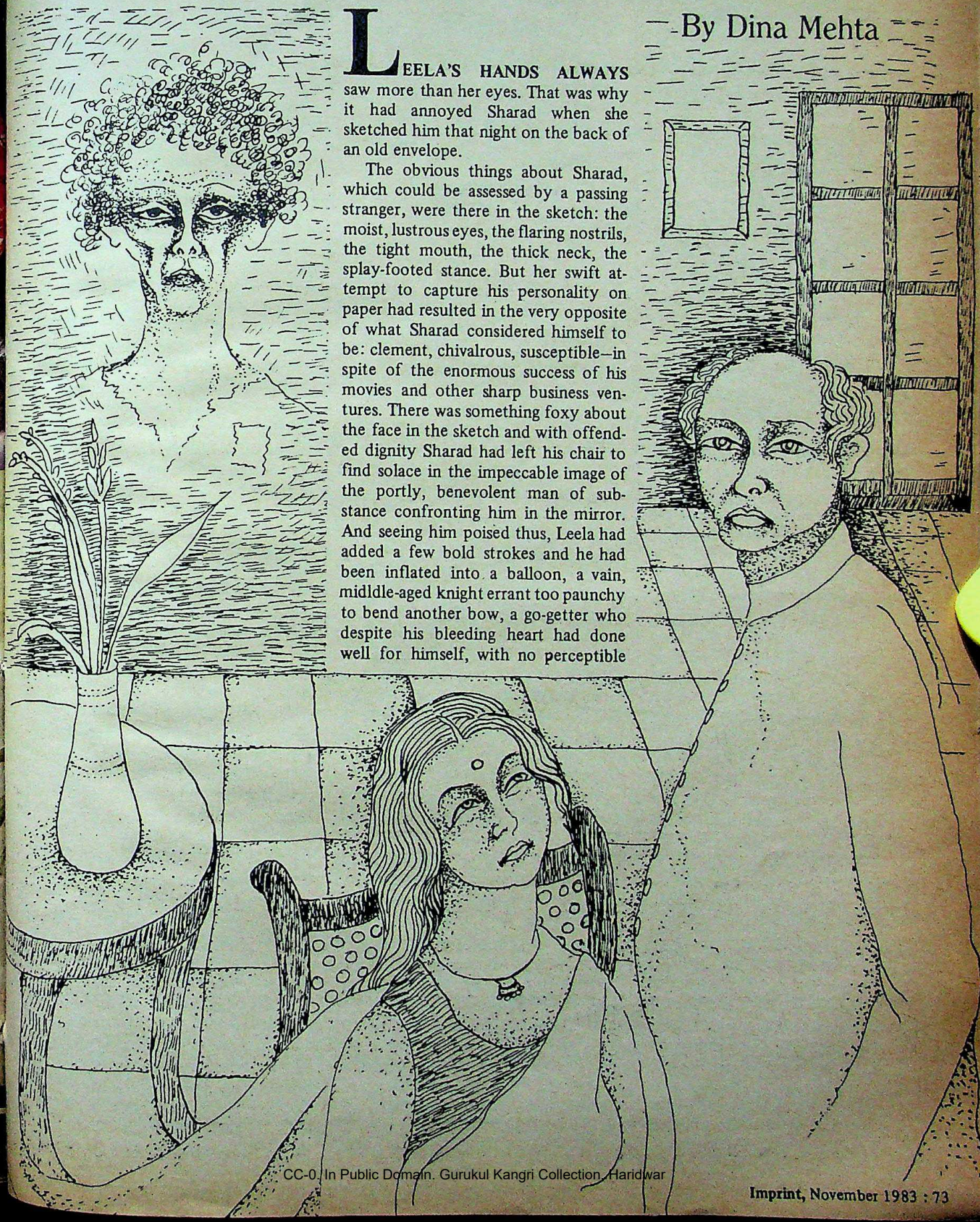
THE LONELY VIGIL

—By Dina Mehta



LEELA'S HANDS ALWAYS saw more than her eyes. That was why it had annoyed Sharad when she sketched him that night on the back of an old envelope.

The obvious things about Sharad, which could be assessed by a passing stranger, were there in the sketch: the moist, lustrous eyes, the flaring nostrils, the tight mouth, the thick neck, the splay-footed stance. But her swift attempt to capture his personality on paper had resulted in the very opposite of what Sharad considered himself to be: clement, chivalrous, susceptible—in spite of the enormous success of his movies and other sharp business ventures. There was something foxy about the face in the sketch and with offended dignity Sharad had left his chair to find solace in the impeccable image of the portly, benevolent man of substance confronting him in the mirror. And seeing him poised thus, Leela had added a few bold strokes and he had been inflated into a balloon, a vain, midldle-aged knight errant too paunchy to bend another bow, a go-getter who despite his bleeding heart had done well for himself, with no perceptible

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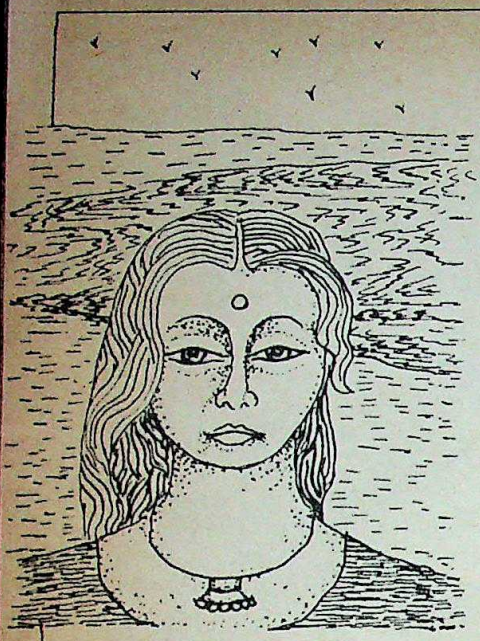

load on his conscience. The additions, incredibly expressive, had upset Sharad further. He did not appreciate the masterful assurance of the lines and she had torn up the sketch. But his mood had remained sulky and he had not made love to her that night.

Would he want to take her out to dinner tonight?

Leela prayed not, as seated on a stool before her dressing-table, she began to fashion the vermilion mark on her forehead with clever fingers. Yet she knew that if he suggested a night out she would agree with alacrity. To keep your man you had to be gay. You had to obliterate everything not of immediate concern to him, feed him on festive moments, make the past and future seem unimportant.

The past? Her hand stayed its task.

The past had begun for Leela more than 20 years ago in a moon-flooded room, with the surf beating its throbbing rhythm into their nights. It was a small village Sharad had swept her off to, at the very edge of the sea. Two weeks of blinding, unreasonable happiness. The sun, the sand. The palms, the waves. The strong scent of drying nets and fish by day. Silver foam by moonlight. The new, unsuspected hunger of her body. And the joy that was just beginning, the joy that was but a thimbleful from the bottomless well that was to be theirs for eternity. Who could have thought that the great movie producer would have noticed the shy girl who worked with downcast eyes on the vulgar posters in his publicity department? But he had noticed her. And it was as if before

Now, with an uneasy sense of defilement, she was awaiting old age.... A few more years and she would be an old woman.

those two enchanted weeks she had not lived. The past. Her past, so dear to her.

And the future? Leela felt a pang and a muscle twitched high up in her cheek. Even when they were together now, there was a great distance between them. A vivid picture flashed before her mind: with painful, melancholy intentness, like one who sits beside the bed of a dear friend in his last illness, she was keeping vigil over their dying love.

No, no, what could she be thinking of? A look of panic showed in the dark eyes that gazed back at her from the mirror. You are condemned, they seemed to say. For a girl born outside the pale of society, you have done well for yourself: daughter of a village *chamar*, your talent got you out of the village, away from the stink of hides and rotting carcasses and earned you an education; and your beauty set you up in this luxurious apartment like a queen. . . But, dear God, Leela stared intently at her face again, why had she made so sad and improvident a use of her talent, her beauty, her whole life? Why had she not indeed lived like a queen, regally, in a white heat of self-esteem, with a royal response to life? And now, with an uneasy sense of defilement—such as she had never felt when as a child she had lived with the smell of animal skins and dung, putrid water and bruised grass—she was awaiting old age and foul disintegration. She could trace the beginnings here; and here; and here. A few more years and this would be an old woman....

Leela got up abruptly, overturning the stool. If Sharad wants to take me out to dinner tonight I'll go, I'll go, she told herself with rising hysteria. But their last night out had been a harrowing experience and though she did not want to think of it now, her nervous mind swung back to it like a needle...

They had stepped out of the night-club satiated with food and drink and a hard, brittle gaiety, when a skeleton hand had stretched out in the darkness of the street and a hoarse, rasping voice had begged for food. Just a bite. A sip. A morsel. Of anything, so long as it was food.

They had as usual ignored the pleas and Sharad had hurried her into the waiting car. But he had trouble starting it and a shadow stood shapeless outside her window, all rags and an emaciated wrist and the same thin dry thread of a voice trailed her into the car. She could not escape it. "Please, Sharad raja?" she had appealed to him.

"What can I do?" Sharad had thrown up his hands from the steering wheel. "There are so many of them." Which was true. The migration from villages to cities never stopped and the recent drought had swelled the number of destitutes in Bombay to frightening proportions. For how can the hungry be expected to understand the finite dimensions of a city? "Can I be buying food for them all?"

"I think this one is starving."

"So?" But she saw his face working. He was tender-hearted and bountiful, her Sharad. The engine had purred into life but he braked savagely. "All right, damn it."

They had bought food for the poor wretch. They need not have stopped to watch him eat but she had insisted on it—as if she were afraid it would be snatched out of his hand if she did not keep watchful guard over him. The creature before them could well be a young man, it was impossible to tell, but he would not be able to protect his rations even from a dog.

So they sat in the car and watched him eat from a wet newspaper, crouched over it like a ragged umber-bird on the pavement, the light from the lamp-post shedding an eerie transparence on the scene below. A hand had quivered, turning into a bird's claw as it reached for the food. Mauling fingers reached a mouth. They heard jaws snap and grind together. Mesmerised, they watched a scrawny neck jerk and contract with the effort of swallowing.

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY FATIMA AHMED

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Almost the last morsel from the soggy paper had been scraped up when without warning he began to retch. There was a violent spasm, a frantic contortion and a head had turned and brought out all that had been swallowed on the pavement. A shrunken stomach had repudiated the load.

They had driven away, not daring to look at each other. The gaiety of the night was frozen solid, it was ice, it was voiceless lament and horror. As sentinel she had failed and it was as if she would never be capable of another human emotion again. Leela had not looked round as she hurried blindly out of the car. She did not ask if Sharad were coming up. And he drove away without a word.

For days food stuck in her throat. Leela could not sleep. Jolted by the shock, she saw, with a hurtful clarity, that the world had become a stranger to her with each passing day. It had kept moving away from her in steps so small that over the years she had failed to notice them. And ever since she had stopped painting—that is, ever since she had given up searching, probing, exploring colours, dimensions, recognising perspectives and correlations; ever since she had beaten down the desire to create the most passionately true, the fairest, the ultimate thing in her power—she could not recapture the world. Or herself. Who was she? Why had she totally submitted herself to the arbitrary rules of a role she had allowed herself to play? She had been afraid and she had chosen to comply. A regulated relationship between lover and mistress was both banal and safe, it gave her the illusion of living in a protected, trustworthy environment. *Safe*, that was what she was. She hugged the word to herself. Why, she could have been one of those hungry wretches on the streets!

Time had mercifully blurred the memory of that night. The emaciated shadows on the streets were part of a grotesque assemblage in an abstract painting. They were not real. They were not her problem. They were not her guilt. . . Yet Leela had not quite forgotten, for her hands trembled a little as she set the stool on its feet again.

Sharad came in as she was fumbling with the clasp of the gold bracelet he had given her.

"You've come, raja!" Leela called out in a breathless, dramatic voice, stepping swiftly into the role she had adopted over the years.

The implacable set of his mouth reminded her of the man in her sketch: a man who had accumulated his wealth by dubious means. . .

He raised his brows. "Were you not expecting me?"

"Yes, yes, of course." Leela gazed up at him with feverish, searching eyes as if she wished to swallow him up, devour him whole as he stood there before her with the profile of his belly clearly delineated by the high-buttoned coat. "My, you are all dressed up," she added brightly.

"Yes." His voice was self-conscious, wary, as he smoothed his new *achkhan* with thick, powerful fingers.

Fidgeting awkwardly with the bracelet, Leela waited for the invitation she so dreaded. When he said nothing, she clutched the loose end of her sari with both hands and spoke with false heartiness, "Well sit down, sit down, while I change into something fancy too!" She gave a high-pitched laugh and saw him frown, as if the thick casualness of her voice had grated on him. "A beggar maid can't be seen out with a maharaja?" She spoke gaily. She looked arch. She smiled at him from the corner of her eyes. But her alacrity seemed to displease him, for she saw him frown again and her hands grew cold.

"I thought you were not liking to go out to dinner. Last time you said it."

"Not if you don't want to," Leela said quickly. "But since you are all dressed up—I naturally assumed. . ." she faltered, then went on with a little rush. "No, I don't want to go out, really, please. It depresses me. We are sure to run into some of those hungry wretches on the streets. Let's stay here! With my own hands I'll cook something for you, raja. We'll have a nice, quiet. . ."

"Only for half an hour I'm here," Sharad interrupted her with a quick glance at his watch. "Then I go."

"Go?" she looked blank. "Go?"

He spoke casually, "I go to dinner. Supper Club."

Leela sat down abruptly. "But you just said. . ."

"I knew you are not liking to go," he said as he took his seat opposite her, "so I came to say hello. Then I am going."

"Alone?" The word escaped her in spite of herself.

"I am taking my wife," he said, evading her eyes. "Her brother and his wife are in town, didn't I tell you yesterday? I am having to take them out. You know how it is," he added deprecatingly.

Leela clasped her hands tightly in her lap. It's a lie, she told herself dully. It's a lie. He is not going with his wife. He is going with someone else. A girl. Another actress, must be. I know it, I know it. Her lips trembled.

She began to speak rapidly, her voice thick and choked, the words falling, stumbling over each other: "Why do you lie to me? Why? Why? You are free to do what you like. Go with whom you like. Take anyone out to dinner, I don't care. You know I don't care. Because you always come back to me, always. I leave you as free as the wind, there is only the bond of love between us." She twisted her hands in anguish. "Then why do you lie to me? Tell me why, why, why?"

She went on ceaselessly, almost

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incoherent. "Why do you have to lie? You know I am devoted to you. Don't you? You know I have surrendered myself to you with perfect faith, utterly, with complete abandon." A wild look of exaltation appeared on her face as the steady, devastating stream of words bubbled out of her mouth. "I don't ask for anything. Do I? Do I? I demand nothing. Nothing. You can trample on me. Yes, trample on me. Stamp me into the dust!" Even as she said these things one part of Leela was aghast. She knew these hysterical outbursts always ended in disaster, she only succeeded in exasperating him every time she subjected him to an inquisition. . . Yet here she was, doing the very things she had forbidden herself.

Sharad let her speak. He was not listening, he appeared to be overcome by a great ennui. He looked round the room he had furnished so lavishly for her with glum disapproval, as if all those peacock blue and yellow draperies made him long for restful colours, for cool, blank, unadorned walls.

"I don't want to stand in your way for anything," the desperate voice churned on. "Anything. You can have your fun and—and your freedom. Have I ever tried to stand in your way? See for yourself how little I stand in your way for anything. For anything. Don't you know me? Believe me?"

"Yes of course," he said. "Of course I am believing you." He looked broodingly at her twisted, agonised face.

"Then why do you lie to me?" Tears streamed down her cheeks and left streaks of black there. She no longer looked lovely when she cried. "Why do you lie? Why, why?"

"Who's lying? I am having to take my wife. . ."

Her face hardened, even the tears seemed to freeze on her cheeks. "Why don't you tell me the truth? Why don't you trust me any more?" She was bent on stripping him, laying bare the falsehood, humiliating him, crumbling his papier/ maché defences with her unrelenting blasts.

"But I do trust you." He was bored. He was patient. He was anything but combative.

"I know I count for nothing! I accept that I am nothing. I am ready to accept anything from you!" All her obstinacy was roused and slowly but surely she was driving him into a corner. At any moment now she expected him to capitulate.

He sighed. "Leela, you must not. . ."

But in her flagellant mood she would not listen. "Why don't you believe I am sincere? Have you learnt to doubt my word? I ask nothing for myself. Have I not given up everything for you? Made enough sacrifices? My work, my talent, my painting. . ."

But she had said the wrong thing. "Sacrifices!" He stood up. "*You* made the sacrifices?" His lustrous eyes flashed. "What kind of life were you having when I took you out of it, eh? Who *were* you before you came to the city, eh? A pariah that is not allowed up a temple's steps! Even your shadow on the roads causes pollution. Even from the village well you were not allowed to draw water, you were always saying. Even a *paanwalla* threw a jugful of water on the coin you gave him to disinfect it! And I! I am having pure blood in my veins! I am from Brahmin stock. You understand?" He was heroic now in his wrath. "Who was my father, are you knowing? And who was yours? A leatherworker, *chamar*. . ."

"Oh please stop."

"And my mother, who she was, you are knowing?"

"Don't, no more. . ."

"Then what are you talking, eh?"

The set of his mouth was implacable and for a brief moment she recognised the man in her sketch: the man of power who had accumulated his wealth by dubious means, who had his greedy hand in every financial pie in the country, the producer of bastard movies, the promoter of spurious housing projects, the manipulator of grain deals made possible by droughts and famines. . . But she really did not wish to see. She hid her hands in her lap as she said, "We were talking of us, Sharad. What is happening to us?" Now her despair was keen and real. "You want to drive me out of my mind, is that it?"

"Then you don't talk!" But he was somewhat mollified and sat down again.

"You'll end up by deserting me!"

"No no. Of course not." His voice had softened perceptibly and immediately she expected him to acknowledge defeat and then she would become radiant, her voice would take on warm, thrilled accents and she would draw him closer in a stranglehold, protesting all the time that he was free to do just as he chose.

Leela's face was convulsed as she said, "You'll end up by walking out on me!"

Sharad rose to his feet again. He sighed deeply, went up to her where she sat and cradled her face against his paunch. "Of course I can never be deserting you, how can I? Do I have a heart of stone? You are upsetting yourself over nothing. I have to give some time to my wife"—she stiffened in his arms and he continued hastily—"but I will see you tomorrow."

She knew then that she had lost this battle. She tried to smile up at him, cloying and sponge-like in her humility and the effort caused a muscle high up in her cheek to twitch violently. But he was glancing surreptitiously at his watch.

For a full hour after he left, Leela wept. She wept for her lost youth. She wept out of pity for herself for despite every effort on her part the breach between them continued to widen. She wept in terror that one day he would leave her for a younger woman and how could she bear to grow old alone? Behind her eyelids she saw a lone figure toiling wearily, in immense solitude, towards decrepitude and death. And she wept for that other unidentified thing she had lost since she was a little girl, so that now her eyes strayed to the ground, never up at the stars.

At last the tears ceased. Leela dragged herself to the mirror and began to repair her face, which was in a hideous mess. For several minutes as she worked on her eyes with *kajal* she felt nothing. She even attempted a wan smile. Poor Sharad. What a scene she had made for him! Abruptly she swallowed her smile. He *had* lied to her, hadn't he? It was better, for her own peace of mind, to turn a blind eye to his frequent betrayals, to leave his subterfuges unanalysed. She went on disguising her face. He had promised to see her tomorrow, hadn't he? She would wait for tomorrow. ♦

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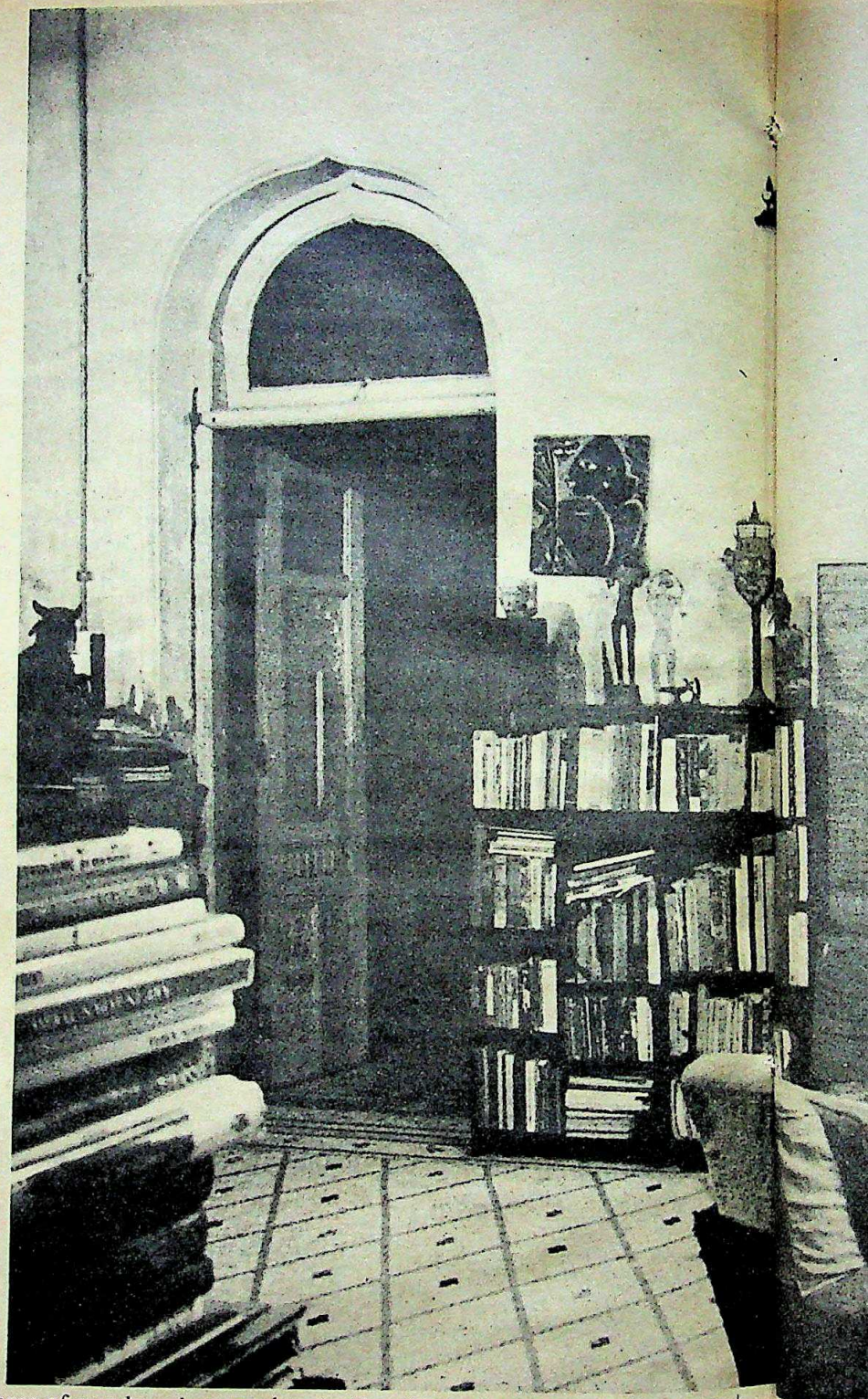
Mulk Raj Anand

Photographed By Ayesha Soni



IT'S LARGE, HIGH-CEILINGED, dark and musty—a room which needs a light even during the day. It is a rare size compared to the tiny matchbox apartments that are rented in the other buildings in Cuffe Parade. Crowded along the edges in dusty profusion are the books collected by art connoisseur Mulk Raj Anand over the last 30 years—books on art, novels and the *Marg* volumes.

Dressed in his casual *kurta-chooridar* which is his normal dress, Mulk Raj Anand talks of this room with tenderness. "I have loved so much and lived in it so creatively that it has an atmosphere of its own... Just look at the space all around. The people who built this room had an awareness—they left room for you to move and relax." His love for the room is intensified by the hatred he has for the apartments opposite.

But the feeling for the room has been built up over the years. Mulk Raj Anand inherited the flat from Anil D'Silva who started off the *Marg Encyclopaedia*—a magazine he has been in touch with since its inception. For the first seven years this very room served as a production platform for *Marg*. "All our work was done here. One corner was reserved for the typing and the rest of the room was for the research."

Functionally bare (his wife Shirin conducts Bharata Natyam classes here) the room is still distinctly Dr Anand's. The painting above his corner—consisting of the bed and desk where he spends practically his whole day—is done by a Sri Lankan artist, George Keyt. Dr Anand claims that it is a perfect harmony of sound and colour. "The figures are done in the pattern of sound waves linked by the musical instruments."

These artistic mementoes are, in fact, what Dr Anand dotes on. Every relic has some history. "The cow sculpture (the one to the extreme left of the picture) is from Bastar. You can almost feel a sense of wonder grip you when you see this simple but powerful shape. In fact, one can almost say, that the power of the cow is entirely in the nostrils."

Other treasured pieces include the Buddha (ninth century BC) which is on a showcase opposite Anand's corner and the tantrik paintings. "The Buddha used to preach the eight-fold path of gentleness," Dr Anand mumbles inaudibly. "It is the same calm awareness from which I write books—with detachment and a total awareness of good and evil." There are three Buddhas in the room—one so old that it is practically crumbling.

Mulk Raj Anand spends at least four days of every week in this flat. The rest of the time he spends in Khandala—where he actually writes and paints. He adheres to a strict

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routine which he has laid down for himself years back: a walk at 5.30 am to begin the day; 6.30: tea; by 9.30 he has finished writing whatever he has to for the day. "I spend a lot of time on translations." After a quick lunch and a long nap in the afternoon he entertains after six pm and is in bed by ten pm.

Little wonder then that Mulk Raj Anand regards the room as one that has a character. Within its untidy clutter of books exists an order that only he can understand. He sits in his corner in his own specific way—either cross-legged or reclining on the *gaddi*. All his reference books are within easy grasp behind him. The lamplight can be adjusted to fall where he wants it to. The kalamkari bedspread was his choice—everything has to be just right.

And in this little corner with his beloved art books and his treasures, Mulk Raj Anand sits esconced in an existence which disdains any other. "I feel it is important to bring a freshness to the direct experience of the human predicament... Human living has become dark and impossible. How can we speak of culture till we have this darkness all around?"

— Interviewed By Shirin Mehta

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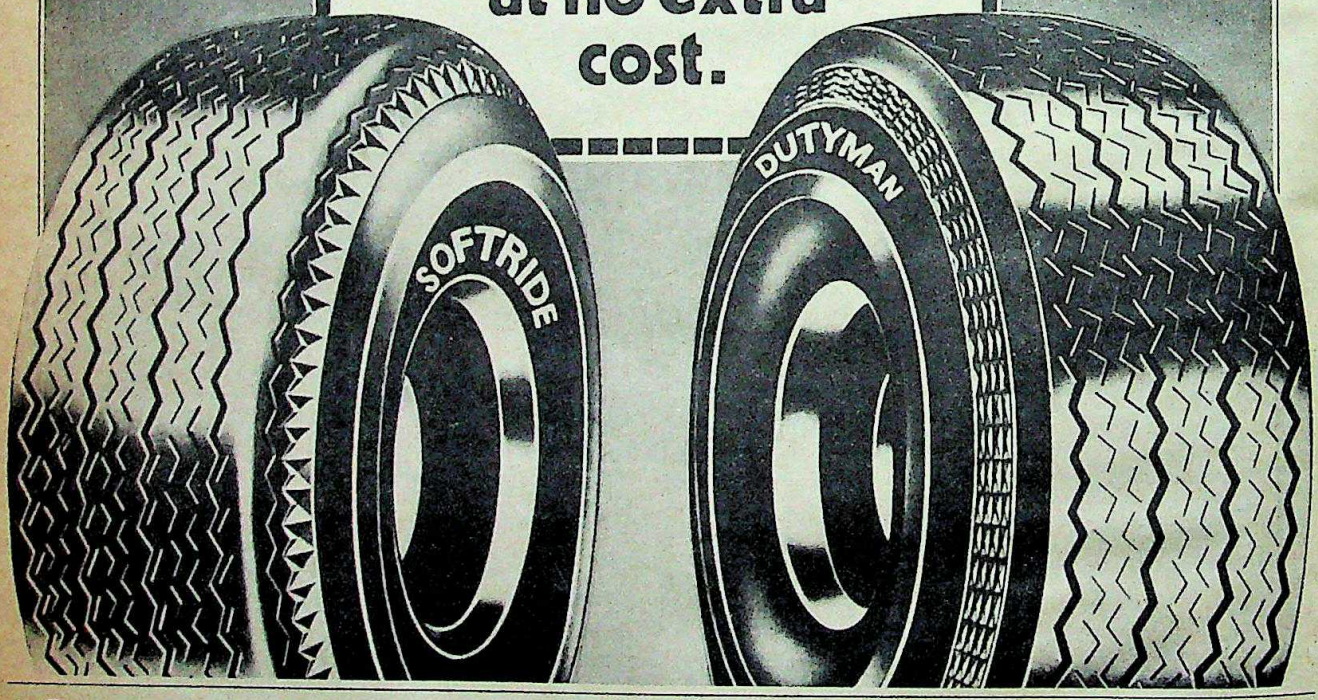

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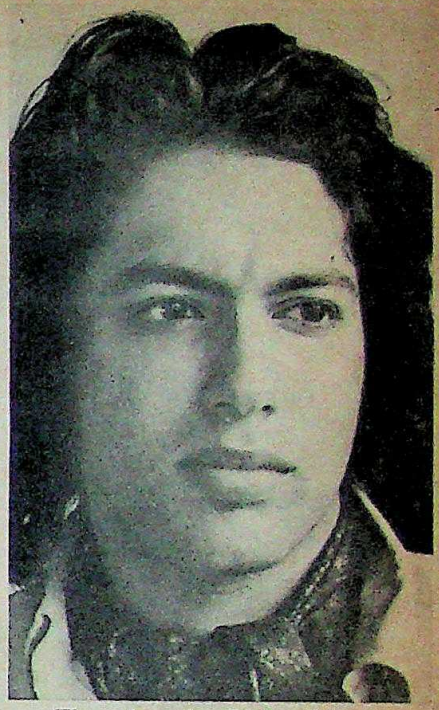
Guest Column/by Dhiren Bhagat

THE TELE-VISUALISING OF KIPLING'S KIM



The columnist: Dhiren Bhagat.

EARLIER THIS YEAR ANGUS Wilson was in Bombay and when we met, the talk inevitably veered round to Raj literature. Wilson is no stranger to the subject having written a highly acclaimed book on Kipling. He recognised that at present there was a great deal of vulgar interest in the Raj, quite possibly, he suggested, part of a Thatcherite obsession with Empire. But he would not dismiss interest in the Raj as superficially as that. "At a more intelligent level," he went on, "it could be that the Raj and India provide our art some more fixed and formal shapes, some more interesting shapes, shapes like the extraordinary relationship between Kim and the lama, shapes our literature wouldn't have without recourse to India."

It is difficult to disagree. Even after the appearance of *Midnight's Children*, *Kim* is still quite possibly the finest story about India, as Niradh Chaudhuri once described it. Kipling has of late been maligned as an imperialist and less plausibly, as a racist and in consequence recent generations of Indians have been educated without ever reading *Kim*. (Everyone knows the first line of *The Ballad of East and West*: 'Oh, East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet' but how many know the third and fourth lines of the same poem: 'But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,/ When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!'?) But unpleasant though Kipling's attitudes may be in some of his work, in *Kim* he transcended the parochialism that gives offence and his empathy with all the Indian characters comes through clearly.

Dhiren Bhagat is the editor of a forthcoming book -Disguises-How Photographs Lie *to be published by Hamlyn, London.*

Though generations of English schoolchildren have read *Kim* as an adventure story it is much more than that, in fact it isn't a children's novel at all. True there is the adventure of Kim working for the Secret Service, wresting secrets about the North West Frontier Province, keeping the bad Russians out, playing the Great Game. But Mahbub Ali, the Afghan horse trader and secret agent is only one of Kim's gurus: the lama is the other and he instructs Kim in the Way of the Wheel. The tease in the novel is that we never know which quest Kipling considers the more important: both are concerned with seeing aright and Kim inherits both visions.

Towards the end of the novel Kim the waif, the Irish orphan who was reared in the bazaars of Lahore wants to know who he is. As Ravi Seth, the 14-year-old boy who will play Kim in the film puts it: "He has to decide whether he is black or white and he decides that doesn't matter." Angus Wilson's answer is a little more literary but substantially the same: "The story of Kim and the lama is. . . the culmination and essence of all the transcendence that Kipling gained from his Indian experience. In it alone of all his works he does ask 'Who is Kim?' although he cannot answer the question. In a sense, the answer is the book itself, for it is the best thing he ever wrote." (*The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling* Secker and Warburg, 1977). It is a question that has always reached the Anglo-Indians: and of late the Indo-Anglians have begun to ask it as well.

BACK IN 1950 Victor Saville directed MGM's version of the novel: Dean Stockwell and Eroll Flynn spying for the Empire against the Russians in Afghanistan. The result was predictable. Now with the Raj boom on in the West these days it was hardly likely that Kim would be left out. David Conroy, Managing Director of London Films, got the bright idea two-and-a-half years ago. What he didn't have was the four million dollars.

No matter. Several trips to America later he had done a deal with CBS network. They agreed to buy the finished product for American television at a whopping price. Conroy hired his crew and came to India to shoot, bringing with him some 45 people.

Initially Waris Hussein, the celebrated TV director, was to have directed the film. But due to his post-production commitments with *Princess Daisy*, a mini serial he is making for NBC (an adaptation of the Judith Krantz novel of that name) he was unable to make *Kim*. So Conroy hired Al Rakinoff, a Canadian director who lives and works in England. Unfortunately an illness in the family prevented Rakinoff from taking on the assignment at the last moment and in consequence John Davies who was to have produced the film took over as director and Conroy moved in as producer. The two have often worked together, notably in the late '60s when Conroy was with the BBC and Davies a freelance director. Together they made *Nana*, *Germinale* and the epic 20-part *War and Peace*.

I REACHED MANALI on September 23 on the flight that brought Peter O'Toole in. He looked dazed. He had

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"For a man who had once described acting as 'just farting about in disguise', he did seem to take his work seriously."

just flown in from England hours ago and the ravage of the ride could be discerned on his face. He was accompanied by a dour secretary, a young woman fitted with pillars instead of legs. At Chandigarh airport O'Toole walked to the edge of the tarmac and lit a cigarette. I should have cadged a few minutes from him just then but I had to go into the terminal to make sure about the onward flight. It was a pity because as soon as we reached Manali he became the meditative lama and had to be guided everywhere by his plump secretary. (At one point, two days after he had reached Manali he wandered upto the table where we were having lunch by the river Beas and approached director John Davies' son, Ben. "Hello Ravi." Ben's mother corrected him and before she could point to Ravi Seth, sitting opposite, the only other child at the resort, O'Toole had tripped and begun dragging his dazed self to another table.)

Apparently Kim had been a childhood friend of O'Toole's and he was quite keen on the part of the lama. The only problem that Conroy perceived was O'Toole's piercing blue eyes. But the actor agreed to wear brown contact lenses to correct this. For a man who had once described acting as 'just farting about in disguise' he did seem to take his work seriously.

The crew was divided at four hotels in Manali. I stayed at Span Resorts with the director and the major actors. By any reckoning it must be the most luxurious hotel in the Himalayas, what with its stone chalets with pine pillars, its extravagantly stocked bar (the best in the country) and its excellent view of the river Beas and the Kulu valley. The shooting didn't begin for a few days so I spent my time in the hotel talking to the actors.

Ravi Seth seems an excellent choice for Kim: half Jain, half American. The surprising thing about him is that at school (the International School at Kodaikanal) he has acted in only two plays: "In the Seventh we did *Rapunzel* and this year we did a take-off on *Sleeping Beauty*." When selected for the role he didn't really know *Kim* though he had read *The Jungle Book* a few years ago. "I didn't know Kipling was considered an imperialist," he said insouciantly.

John Rhys-Davies was less insouciant. He is an impressive actor who has played several interesting roles, notably Rodrigues the Portuguese in *Shogun* and Salah the Arab sidekick of Indiana Jones in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. He is to play Babu Hurree Chunder in the film. "When I was at University in the early '60s, *Kim* was very much out of fashion. In fact I was looked upon by most of my friends as a crypto fascist for even daring to mention Kipling because it was a time when we rejected all the colonialist and imperialist attitudes. But he is a very fine writer and can tell a good story, a journalist in fact."

Over the years Rhys-Davies has changed his views on Kipling somewhat. "There are attitudes in his books which I find, which I used to find, plainly disgusting. I *now* think I was oversimplifying, because I think that he was conscious of an ambivalence there, sometimes. Sometimes he is merely recording some things like a journalist does... I think *Kim* is one of the great childhood books, like *Swallows and Amazons* or *Pinnocchio*. You know it's one of those wonderful books of childhood that you read as a child and look back in affection as an adult. You can love Robinson Crusoe and still be opposed to racism. It may appear incompatible but if you have that rigid attitude towards books then for God's sake half of what was written before 1950 is out."

O'Toole: dazed and confused.

The shooting schedule is tight. Two weeks in Manali, three-and-a-half weeks in Jodhpur, two-and-a-half weeks in Agra. And then, at the end a week's studio work back in England—the lama's cell, Father Xavier's tent and a few other shots. Conroy and his crew are busy, determined to make a good movie.

GOOD INTENTIONS APART, what must be recognised is that *Kim* is being made for a TV audience and American TV audiences are particularly stupid. (When Olivier's *Richard III* was shown on American television, General Motors sponsored the programme—NBC had paid half a million dollars for the one screening—and during the commercial breaks viewers were told who Shakespeare was. What really got Olivier's goat though was the commercial in which viewers were told that a certain automobile had 'more power than all the horses in *Richard III*'.) How much will they understand of *Kim*?

Already two concessions have been made for this audience in terms of alterations in the script. One, modern audiences are no longer familiar with the political situation of the day: Afghanistan being protected by the British from the bad Russians. (When the Russians walked into Afghanistan and it seemed possible that Reagan might send in the troops, an American magazine conducted a poll that reveal-

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"Good intentions apart, what must be recognised is that Kim is being made for TV and American TV audiences are stupid."

The Unit: clockwise, Conroy, Agha, Seth and Rhys-Davies.

ed that approximately 98 per cent of the Americans didn't know what Afghanistan was.) To cope with this ignorance David Conroy has added a few scenes at the beginning of the movie featuring two Rajas, the Raja of Hilas and Raja of Bunar to be played by veterans of the stage, Aamir Raza Husain and Jalal Agha. In these scenes the political situation of the time will be sketched in. Of course there were no Rajas of Hilas and Bunar—the Frontier was ruled by Afghan tribal chiefs—but this slip is Kipling's. Though the Rajas don't actually appear in the novel we do have Hurree Babu explaining to Kim: "Hilas and Bunar—Rajas with guns—undertook for a price to guard the passes against all coming from the North."

The other change in the script is the more serious one and here the hand of the American financiers becomes evident. (It must be recalled in this context that David Lean has been plagued by his American financiers in much the same way: in *Passage to India* they insist the 'romantic interest' must be developed between Adele and Aziz if no one else can be found.) Conroy has gone in for a sub-plot that didn't exist in the original, a love story between Corporal Bruce (played by Mick Ford) and Indra. Kim assists the two in their assignations and finally when the two get together, Corporal Bruce deserts the Army for Indra's charms. Conroy tries to justify the addition: "One can use the sub-plot almost as shorthand to tell Kim's own story..." but it won't wash.

The other concession of course is in the use of Western actors. Tyrone Power was somehow 'acceptable' in 1940 in *The Rains Came* and Yul Brynner as late as 1966 in *The Long Duel* but thanks to Merchant-Ivory and now to Attenborough (Kingsley's role was exceptionally successful but the rest of the casting was racially accurate) I think the audiences have become too sophisticated to accept Western actors playing Indians on screen. Thank God Lean didn't go in for a Robert De Niro as Aziz. Unfortunately, Conroy and his team (casting director Ann Fieldan) thought otherwise. The three important Indian roles—Mahbub Ali, the lama, Babu Hurree Chunder—have been given to prominent Westerners. Director John Davies was on the defensive when he discussed this with me. "One of the problems obviously is, if you're mounting a production like this and of course, yes, it's a compromise if you like, you're making it necessarily for a Western television audience, it's very expensive to make. To make it possible you have to employ actors who are going to bring in the audience... Maybe it would be nice if it wasn't a fact. But it's a fact."

David Conroy was definite about what he wanted from the film. "My real interest is the story of a young boy who is growing up in India as an Indian and suddenly he is told he is English. Then he begins his search for his own identity. *I'm neither, I'm Kim.* That's what's important. That, if you like it, is the story. What permeates all my work (and *Kim* is a good example of this) is having a good yarn which appeals to a mass audience, that's what I want to do and at the same time put in a little thought for them, something that they wouldn't normally come across and I'd like to think that if other producers made this film they wouldn't put it in. They'd go for the adventure story."

Has he made concessions for this mass audience? "No, the dilemma never arose: should I play for the mass audience or not? My dilemma instead was: is my vision stereotyped? How am I perceiving India? How am I perceiving Indians and their behaviour? And the answer comes back: through European eyes, with very little knowledge of India, not sufficient knowledge of India to do this, and maybe with the heritage of the British Raj sitting on my shoulder... One of the edicts I have issued is: there will be no snake charmers. There will be no Indian rope tricks. That's not what I want to see. I want to see India."

On the call-sheet for September 26, the first day of the shooting, the first assistant, a genial podgy Cockney called Gino, inserted a motto for the day: "Out of intense complexities intense simplicities emerge." No doubt he was referring to the seemingly unwieldy logistics of the operation and the disorganisation that was evident amongst the actors on the weekend before it all began. (Nobody seemed to know the other: the landslides had played havoc with the valley's hills and in one case there was a motor accident on the way to the hotel: nobody was aware that the unit had brought up a doctor from Delhi.) Gino's motto expressed the hope that all would go well. But equally, it was a comment on the film.

Let's see what Conroy sees. I tend to be wary of intense simplicities that just emerge from intense complexities. As Mahbub Ali wisely cautioned Kim: "The Game is so large that one sees but a little at a time." ◆

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Kitsch As An Art Form

By JP Singhal

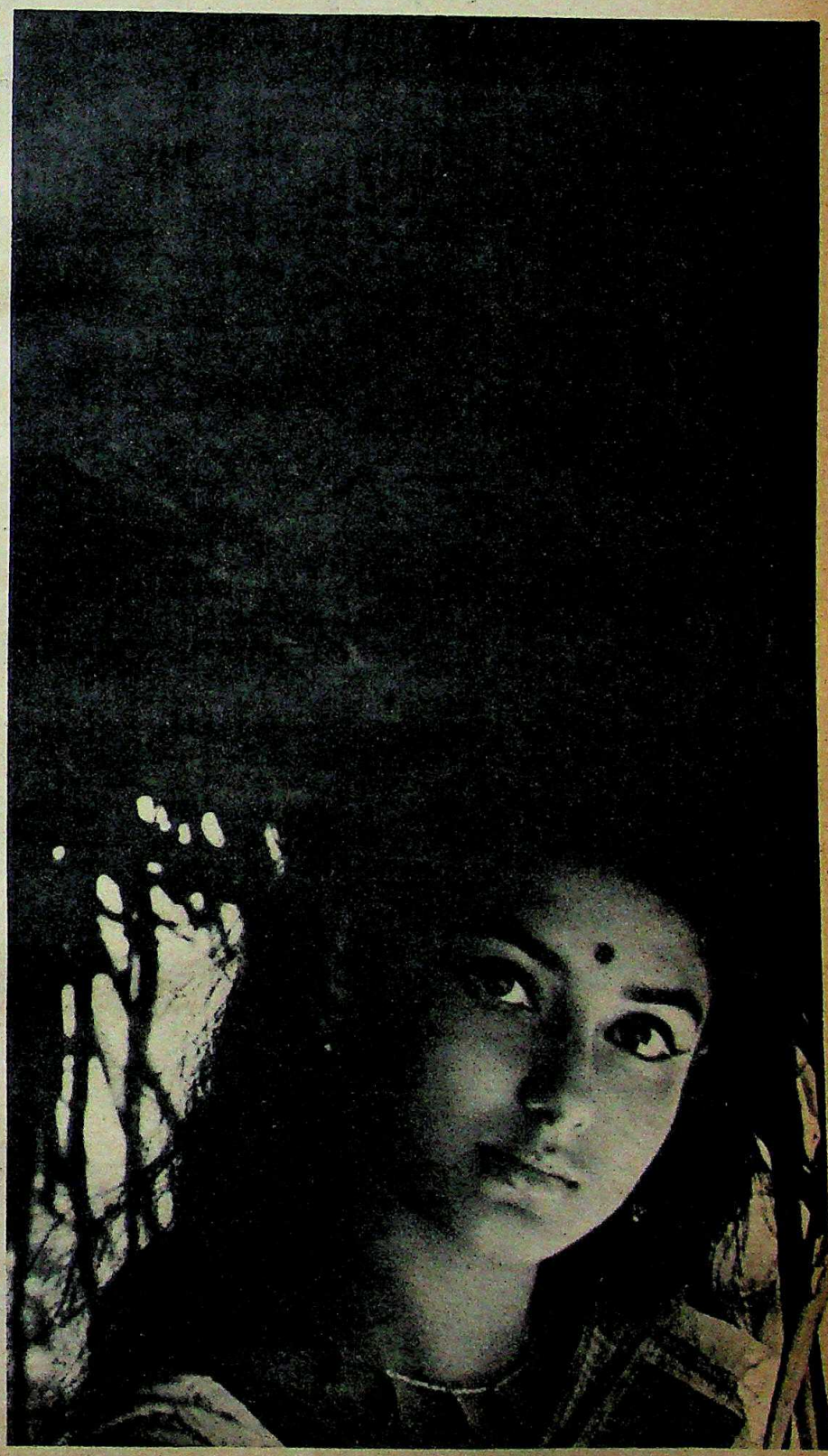
"I AM A glamour man. I believe in the right pose, the right composition, the right lighting." He is also, he admits, a workaholic dogged by perpetual fears of insecurity. These qualities have earned JP Singhal, 49, success in the advertising photography business and a special niche in the Hindi film industry. A 'Singhal portrait' is considered a 'passport' to stardom and the list of stars who had their first 'publicity photograph' taken by him reads like a *Who's Who*: Hema Malini, Dimple Kapadia, Raakhee, Poonam Dhillon, Sunjay Dutt.

A short, jovial man, Singhal makes no defences about his work—"I am a glamour photographer"—yet even within this self-restricted area he has evolved and consistently stuck to a 'Singhal style' that has become a hallmark amongst advertising agencies and film publicists: soft-focus, sensual portraits (usually of girls), shot *always* in natural light. Though he has been in the business for the last ten years he still doesn't have a regular studio or the glamour photographer's usual paraphernalia of lights, strobes and umbrellas.

Singhal's favourite photographer is, obviously, David Hamilton. But unlike Hamilton, Singhal says, his focus is not on just nubile girls but 'classical feminine beauty'.

"My photographs have a 'painterly touch', my work is recognised for that," he says proudly, as he may well be. Singhal is an established calendar artist and he estimates that the total number of calendar reproductions of his photographs and paintings runs into several crores. But, he still feels, 'insecure'. "I come from a middle class family from Meerut. I cannot speak English fluently and I never formally studied painting or photography.

"I do not even fully know my own camera. But I never felt the need either. After all, photography is essentially a question of only how much you want to see and from where." ♦



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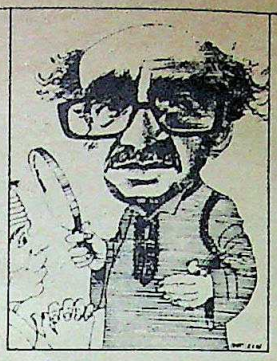
ASTROLOGY

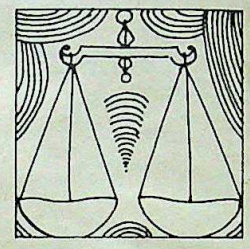
Bejan Daruwalla's Forecasts For November



ARIES: March 21 to April 20: The sun in your eighth angle will influence your joint-finances, taxes, insurance, religious ties and issues related to wills and legacy. Intimate relationships are foretold at least till November 12. On and after November 23, active plans for a journey, a collaboration, a publicity boost, will be charted out. This trend will continue well into December. There's a marked danger of ill-health and accidents.

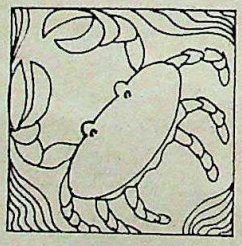
GEMINI: May 22 to June 21: Except for minor health problems and an additional work load, a favourable month. Partnerships now show signs of blossoming. It could mean wedlock shortly, or an official engagement. However, you could fall out with colleagues and superiors in November. So, why not cool it? Take periodic rest and break your tight working schedule. From November 23 to December 23 a home away from home, research and a tie-in are predicted.

LEO: July 23 to August 23: The home base could be hard hit. That means elders, family matters, property issues, could give you a few anxious moments. On the pleasant side, Venus in your third sector from November 9 assures you contacts and partnerships. Should your individual horoscope be strong, it could result in a home away from home and foreign collaborations. It is absolutely certain that in the first 19 days, you will feel restless.



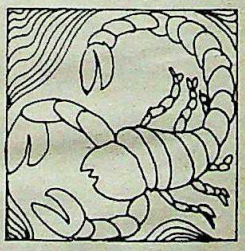
LIBRA: September 24 to October 23: Three directions now are indicated: finance and family; trips and ties (especially after the first fortnight); news, messages and journeys. The first fortnight is for finance and family, buying, selling, investing. After that, as Venus shifts in your own sign (it actually does so on the 9th), you will deck yourself good and propah! The last week is for making your major moves.

TAURUS: April 21 to May 21: A month of slight opposition and upsets, but these can be overcome depending on your inclination and innate nature. Mars is in your fifth angle till the 17th, making you romantically inclined. A legal battle, a confrontation, is not ruled out. There could be a slight money squeeze till the 19th. If you feel things are not going according to plan, bring into play your characteristic patience and stamina.



CANCER: June 22 to July 22: A newsy month, a month of exceptional creativity, if only, you let yourself go and trust your intuition. The influence of Mars means you will be reaching out to people and places by varied media of communication and transport. Also deeds and documents will be signed and journeys are foretold. Go all out the first fortnight to make your presence felt. Be seen, heard, noticed. That's the way to success.

VIRGO: August 24 to September 23: The duo of Mars-Venus in your sign, helps you to feel the quick pace of life, communicate effectively, crash through a party or a social or a club and win plaudits! News, views, messages, documents, contracts, legacy, and funds neatly sum up the month for you. The last week is the launch-pad for installation, renovation and decoration. This will be one of the busiest months of the year.



SCORPIO: October 24 to November 22: Despite the dreaded Sun-Saturn conjunction in your sign, headway can be made in terms of travel, contacts and alliances. It might not be easy, but Scorpio persistency is tremendous and therefore, there's hope. A lot of movement, this month, as Mercury flits in your sign till the 13th. The last week is very definitely for finance, food and family. Health and relations are suspect.

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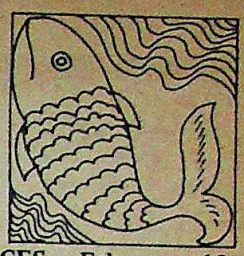
SAGITTARIUS: November 23 to December 21: Good in patches, but expenses and introversion, could make it tough for you. You will turn inwards till the 15th, thanks to the new moon effect. After that, you will open out. Links with foreigners, strangers, suspicious characters are foretold. Visits to hospitals, asylums, clinics are your destiny. On and after the 17th, distant lands and new places beckon you. Shady dealings are possible. Your Jupiterian optimism won't see any obstacles in your path, which may be just as well as this could keep your spirits high. Your strong character will draw many.

CAPRICORN: December 22 to January 20: Act fast, move rapidly, think quickly and the world will be yours. Boundless energy will go with strong ambition this month and that's the sure way to succeed. Alliances, group meetings, socials, conferences are in store. The secret is in taking the initiative and forging ahead. November is the time to marshall your resources, regroup your forces and attack purposefully. That's the key to it all. Be the leader. Push for all your worth. But you are also advised to control your dictatorial qualities or else you could be clashing with people who are less practical.

AQUARIUS: January 27 to February 18: The sun and Mercury in your tenth sector signifies terrific work pressures, a striving towards perfection, health hazards to elders, parents and in-laws. Your enemies will be out to get you but your prestige will not be hit. You will turn the tables on your detractors on and after the 23rd. It is only the first fortnight, which, though eventful, will be exceptionally strenuous, in some cases, shattering. In the work field, anticipate changes; these could be thrust upon you. In a nutshell, your work area and your status are the two flash points in November.



PISCES: February 19 to March 20: A period of evolution, progress, intuition and though these are big words, the prediction is not hollow! Journeys, alliances, flights of imagination are predicted. There is a possibility of pipe-dreams and hallucinations too, tours and publicity boosts. Astrologers, psychics, writers, teachers, preachers, swindlers, con-men, admen, politicians, do make it big as Mercury conjuncts Uranus this month. The last seven days are for consolidating your position. In other words, a month of power. Also a good time to re-evaluate your career and personal life and make decisions. ♦

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